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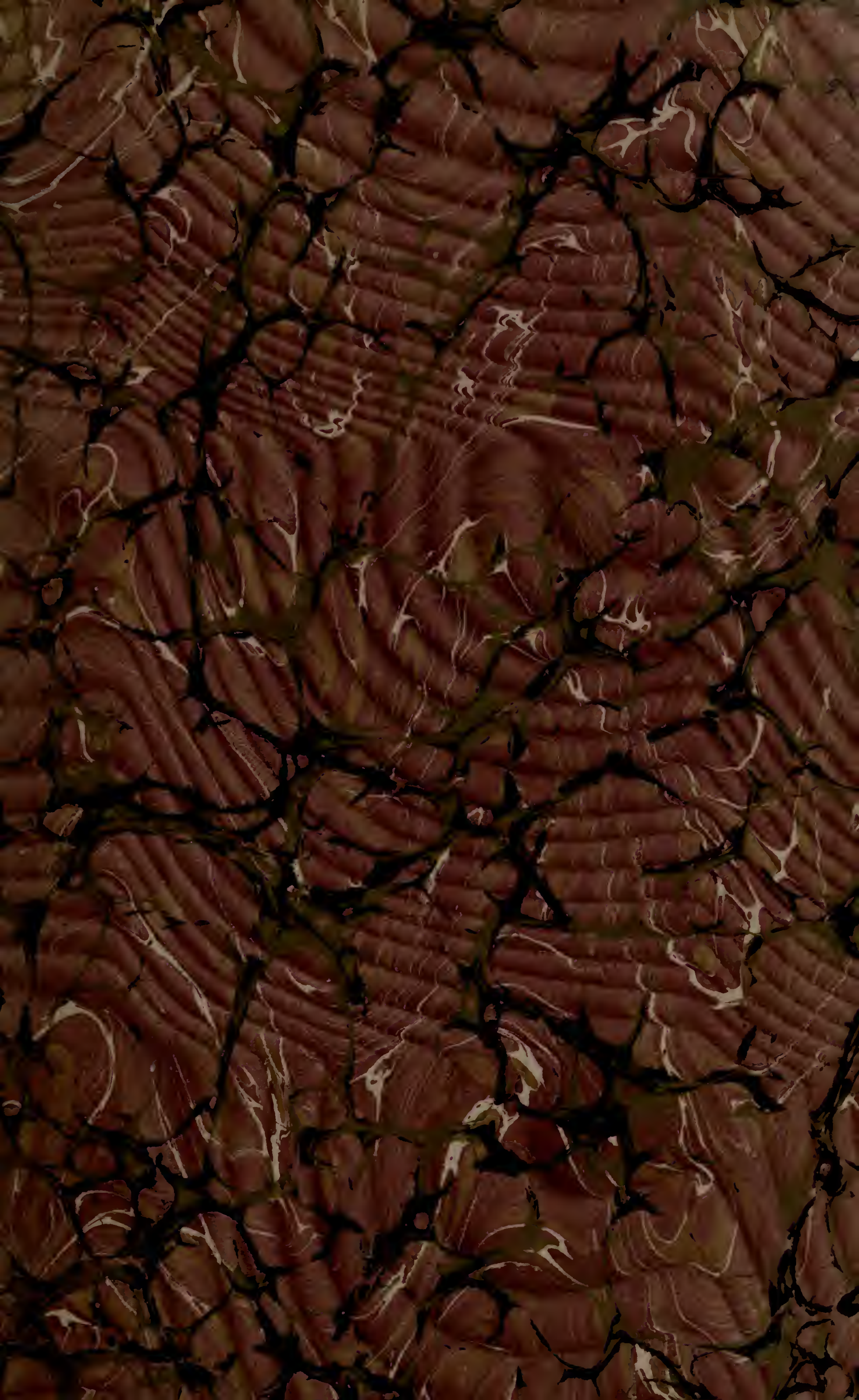

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THE

STAR-CHAMBER

AINSWORTH'S NOVELS.

The 8vo Edition, with all the Original Illustrations by GEORGE CRUIKSHANK, SIR JOHN GILBERT, R.A., H. K. BROWNE, *and others.*

THE TOWER OF LONDON.
THE LANCASHIRE WITCHES.
OLD ST. PAUL'S.
WINDSOR CASTLE.
THE MISER'S DAUGHTER.
GUY FAWKES.
JACK SHEPPARD.
ROOKWOOD.
THE STAR CHAMBER.
CRICHTON.
MERVYN CLITHEROE.
THE SPENDTHRIFT.
BOSCOBEL.
OVINGDEAN GRANGE.
THE FLITCH OF BACON.
AURIOL.

FRONTISPIECE.

THE

STAR-CHAMBER

An Historical Romance

BY

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH
AUTHOR OF
"THE TOWER OF LONDON" ETC.

I will make a Star-Chamber matter of it.
SHAKSPEARE—*Merry Wives of Windsor.*

ILLUSTRATED BY PHIZ

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MRS. MOSTYN,

WITH MUCH ESTEEM.

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THE STAR-CHAMBER.

CHAPTER I.

THE THREE CRANES IN THE VINTRY.

ADJOINING the Vintry Wharf, and at the corner of a narrow lane communicating with Thames Street, there stood, in the early part of the seventeenth century, a tavern called the Three Cranes. This old and renowned place of entertainment had then been in existence more than two hundred years, though under other designations. In the reign of Richard II., when it was first established, it was styled the Painted Tavern, from the circumstance of its outer walls being fancifully coloured and adorned with Bacchanalian devices. But these decorations went out of fashion in time, and the tavern, somewhat changing its external features, though preserving all its internal comforts and accommodation, assumed the name of the Three Crowns, under which title it continued until the accession of Elizabeth, when it became (by a slight modification) the Three Cranes; and so remained in the days of her successor, and, indeed, long afterwards.

Not that the last-adopted denomination had any reference, as might be supposed, to the three huge wooden instruments on the wharf, employed with ropes and pulleys to unload the lighters and other vessels that brought up butts and hogsheads of wine from the larger craft below bridge, and constantly thronged the banks; though, no doubt, they indirectly suggested it. The Three Cranes depicted on the large sign-board, suspended in front of the tavern, were long-necked, long-beaked birds, each with a golden fish in its bill.

But under whatever designation it might be known—Crown or Crane—the tavern had always maintained a high reputation for excellence of wine: and this is the less surprising when we take into account its close proximity to the vast vaults and cellars of the Vintry, where the choicest produce of Gascony, Bordeaux, and other wine-growing districts, was deposited; some of which we may reasonably conclude would find its way

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to its tables. Good wine, it may be incidentally remarked, was cheap enough when the Three Cranes was first opened, the delicate juice of the Gascoign grape being then vended at fourpence the gallon, and Rhenish at sixpence! Prices, however, had risen considerably at the period of which we propose to treat; but the tavern was as well reputed and well frequented as ever: even more so, for it had considerably advanced in estimation since it came into the hands of a certain enterprising French skipper, Prosper Bonaventure by name, who intrusted its management to his active and pretty little wife Dameris, while he himself prosecuted his trading voyages between the Garonne and the Thames. And very well Madame Bonaventure fulfilled the duties of hostess, as will be seen.

Now, as the skipper was a very sharp fellow, and perfectly understood his business—practically anticipating the transatlantic axiom of buying at the cheapest market and selling at the dearest—he soon contrived to grow rich. He did more: he pleased his customers at the Three Cranes. Taking care to select his wines judiciously, and having good opportunities, he managed to obtain possession of some delicious vintages, which could not be matched elsewhere; and, with this nectar at his command, the fortune of his house was made. All the town gallants flocked to the Three Cranes to dine at the admirable French ordinary newly established there, and crush a flask or so of the exquisite Bordeaux, about which, and its delicate flavour and bouquet, all the connoisseurs in claret were raving. From mid-day, therefore, till late in the afternoon, there were nearly as many gay barges and wherries as lighters lying off the Vintry Wharf; and sometimes, when accommodation was wanting, the little craft were moored along the shore all the way from Queenhithe to the Steelyard; at which latter place the Catherine Wheel was almost as much noted for racy Rhenish and high-dried neat's tongues as our tavern was for fine Bordeaux and well-seasoned patés.

Not the least, however, of the attractions of the Three Cranes, was the hostess herself. A lively little brunette was Madame Bonaventure, still young, or, at all events, very far from being old; with extremely fine teeth, which she was fond of displaying, and a remarkably neat ankle, which she felt no inclination to hide beneath the sweep of her round circling farthingale. Her figure was quite that of a miniature Venus; and as, like most of her countrywomen, she understood the art of dress to admiration, she set off her person to the best advantage; always attiring herself in a style, and in colours, that suited her, and never indulging in an unwarrantable extravagance of ruff, or absurd and unbecoming length of peaked boddice. As to the stuffs she wore, they were certainly above her station, for no court dame could boast of richer silks than those in which the

pretty Dameris appeared on fête days: and this was accounted for by reason that the good skipper seldom returned from a trip to France without bringing his wife a piece of silk, brocade, or velvet from Lyons; or some little matter from Paris, such as a ruff, cuff, partlet, bandlet, or fillet. Thus the last French mode might be seen at the Three Cranes, displayed by the hostess, as well as the last French *entremêt* at its table; since, among other important accessories to the well-doing of the house, Madame Bonaventure kept a *chef de cuisine*—one of her compatriots—of such superlative skill, that in later times he must infallibly have been distinguished as a *cordon bleu*.

But not having yet completed our description of the charming Bordelaise, we must add that she possessed a rich southern complexion, fine sparkling black eyes, shaded by long dark eyelashes, and overarched by jetty brows; and that her raven hair was combed back and gathered in a large roll over her smooth forehead, which had the five points of beauty complete. Over this she wore a prettily-conceived coif, with a frontlet. A well-starched, well-plaited ruff encompassed her throat. Her upper lip was darkened, but in the slightest degree, by down like the softest silk; and this peculiarity (a peculiarity it would be in an Englishwoman, though frequently observable in the beauties of the south of France) lent additional piquancy and zest to her charms in the eyes of her numerous adorers. Her ankles we have said were trim; and it may be added that they were oftener displayed in an embroidered French velvet shoe than in one of Spanish leather; while in walking out she increased her stature "by the altitude of a chopine."

Captain Bonaventure was by no means jealous; and even if he had been, it would have mattered little, since he was so constantly away. Fancying, therefore, she had some of the privileges of a widow, our lively Dameris flirted a good deal with the gayest and handsomest of the galliards frequenting her house. But she knew where to stop; no licence or indecorum was ever permitted at the Three Cranes; and that is saying a great deal in favour of the hostess, when the dissolute character of the age is taken into consideration. Besides this, Cyprien, a stout well-favoured young Gascon, who filled the posts of drawer and chamberlain, together with two or three other trencher-scrapers, who served at table, and waited on the guests, were generally sufficient to clear the house of any troublesome roysterers. Thus the reputation of the Three Cranes was unblemished, in spite of the liveliness and coquetry of its mistress; and in spite, also, of the malicious tongues of rival tavern-keepers, which were loud against it. A pretty woman is sure to have enemies and calumniators, and Madame Bonaventure had more than enow; but she thought very little about them.

There was one point, however, on which it behoved her to be careful; and extremely careful she was—not leaving a single loop-hole for censure or attack. This was the question of religion. On first taking the house, Madame Bonaventure gave it out that she and the skipper were Huguenots, descended from families who had suffered much persecution during the time of the League, for staunch adherence to their faith; and the statement was generally credited, though there were some who professed to doubt it. Certain it was, our hostess did not wear any cross, beads, or other outward symbol of Papacy. And though this might count for little, it was never discovered that she attended mass in secret. Her movements were watched, but without anything coming to light that had reference to religious observances of any kind. Those who tried to trace her, found that her visits were mostly paid to Paris Garden, the Rose, and the Globe (where our immortal bard's plays were then being performed), or some other place of amusement; and if she did go on the river at times, it was merely upon a party of pleasure, accompanied by gay gallants in velvet cloaks and silken doublets, and by light-hearted dames like herself, and not by notorious plotters or sour priests. Still, as many Bordeaux merchants frequented the house, as well as traders from the Hanse towns, and other foreigners, it was looked upon by the suspicious as a hot-bed of Romish heresy and treason. Moreover, these maligners affirmed that English recusants, as well as seminary priests from abroad, had been harboured there, and clandestinely spirited away from the pursuit of justice by the skipper; but the charges were never substantiated, and could, therefore, only proceed from envy and malice. Whatever Madame Bonaventure's religious opinions might be, she kept her own counsel so well that no one ever found them out.

But evil days were at hand. Hitherto, all had been smiling and prosperous. The prospect now began to darken.

Within the last twelve months a strange and unlooked-for interference had taken place with our hostess's profits, which she had viewed, at first, without much anxiety, because she did not clearly comprehend its scope; but latterly, as its formidable character became revealed, it began to fill her with uneasiness. The calamity, as she naturally enough regarded it, arose in the following manner. The present was an age of monopolies and patents, granted by a crown ever eager to obtain money under any pretext, however unjustifiable and iniquitous, provided it was plausibly coloured; and these vexatious privileges were purchased by greedy and unscrupulous persons for the purpose of turning them into instruments of extortion and wrong. Though various branches of trade and industry groaned under the oppression inflicted upon them, there were no means of redress. The patentees enjoyed perfect immunity, grinding them down

as they pleased, farming out whole districts, and dividing the spoil. Their miserable victims dared scarcely murmur; having ever the terrible court of Star-Chamber before them, which their persecutors could command, and which punished libellers—as they would be accounted, if they gave utterance to their wrongs, and charged their oppressors with misdoing—with fine, branding, and the pillory. Many were handled in this sort, and held up *in terrorem* to the others. Hence it came to pass, that the Star-Chamber, from the fearful nature of its machinery; its extraordinary powers; the notorious corruption and venality of its officers; the peculiarity of its practice, which always favoured the plaintiff; and the severity with which it punished any libelling or slanderous words uttered against the king's representative (as the patentees were considered), or any conspiracy or false accusation brought against them;—it came to pass, we say, that this terrible court became as much dreaded in Protestant England as the Inquisition in Catholic Spain. The punishments inflicted by the Star-Chamber were, as we learn from a legal authority, and a counsel in the court, "fine, imprisonment, loss of ears, or nailing to the pillory, slitting the nose, branding the forehead, whipping of late days, wearing of papers in public places, or any punishment but death." And John Chamberlain, Esq., writing to Sir Dudley Carlton, about the same period, observes, that "the world is now much terrified with the Star-Chamber, there being not so little an offence against any proclamation but is liable and subject to the censure of that court. And for proclamations and patents, they are become so ordinary that there is no end; every day bringing forth some new project or other. As, within these two days, here is one come forth for tobacco, wholly engrossed by Sir Thomas Roe and his partners, which, if they can keep and maintain against the general clamour, will be a great commodity; unless, peradventure, indignation, rather than all other reasons, may bring that filthy weed out of use." [What would be the effect of such a patent now-a-days? Would it, at all, restrict the use of the "filthy weed"?] "In truth," proceeds Chamberlain, "the world doth even groan under the burthen of these perpetual patents, which are become so frequent, that whereas at the king's coming in there were complaints of some eight or nine monopolies then in being, they are now said to be multiplied to as many scores."

From the foregoing citation, from a private letter of the time, the state of public feeling may be gathered, and the alarm occasioned in all classes by these oppressions perfectly understood.

Amongst those who had obtained the largest share of spoil were two persons destined to occupy a prominent position in our history. They were Sir Giles Mompesson and Sir Francis Mitchell,—both names held in general dread and detestation,

though no man ventured to speak ill of them openly, since they were as implacable in their animosities as usurious and griping in their demands; and many an ear had been lost, many a nose slit, many a back scourged at the cart's tail, because the unfortunate owners had stigmatized them according to their deserts. Thus they enjoyed a complete immunity of wrong; and, with the terrible court of Star-Chamber to defend them and to punish their enemies, they set all opposition at defiance.

Insatiable as unscrupulous, this avaricious pair were ever on the alert to devise new means of exaction and plunder, and amongst the latest and most productive of their inventions were three patents, which they had obtained through the instrumentality of Sir Edward Villiers (half-brother of the ruling favourite, the Marquis of Buckingham)—and for due consideration-money, of course,—for the licensing of ale-houses, the inspection of inns and hostelries, and the exclusive manufacture of gold and silver thread. It is with the two former of these that we have now to deal; inasmuch as it was their mischievous operation that affected Madame Bonaventure so prejudicially; and this we shall more fully explain, as it will serve to show the working of a frightful system of extortion and injustice happily no longer in existence.

By the sweeping powers conferred upon them by their patents, the whole of the inns of the metropolis were brought under the control of the two extortioners, who levied such imposts as they pleased. The withdrawal of a licence, or the total suppression of a tavern, on the plea of its being a riotous and disorderly house, immediately followed the refusal of any demand, however excessive; and most persons preferred the remote possibility of ruin, with the chance of averting it by ready submission, to the positive certainty of losing both substance and liberty by resistance.

Fearful was the havoc occasioned by these licensed depredators, yet no one dared to check them—no one ventured to repine. They had the name of law to justify their proceedings, and all its authority to uphold them. Compromises were attempted in some instances, but they were found unavailing. Easily evaded by persons who never intended to be bound by them, they only added keenness to the original provocation, without offering a remedy for it. The two bloodsuckers, it was clear, would not desist from draining the life-current from the veins of their victims while a drop remained. And they were well served in their iniquitous task,—for the plain reason that they paid their agents well. Partners they had none; none, at least, who cared to acknowledge themselves as such. But the subordinate officers of the law (and, indeed, some high in office, it was hinted), the sheriff's followers, bailiffs, tipstaves, and others, were all in their pay; besides a host of myrmidons—

base, sordid knaves, who scrupled not at false-swearing, cozenage, or any sort of rascality, even forgery of legal documents, if required.

No wonder poor Madame Bonaventure, finding she had got into the clutches of these harpies, began to tremble for the result.

CHAPTER II.

SIR GILES MOMPESSON AND HIS PARTNER.

Madame Bonaventure had already paid considerable sums to the two extortioners, but she resisted their last application; in consequence of which she received a monition from Sir Giles Mompesson, to the effect that, in a month's time, her licence would be withdrawn, and her house shut up, unless, in the interim, she consented to make amends to himself and his co-patentee, Sir Francis Mitchell, by payment of the sum in question, together with a further sum, equal to it in amount, by way of forfeit; thus doubling the original demand.

Our pretty hostess, it would seem, had placed herself in an awkward predicament by her temerity. Sir Giles was not a man to threaten idly, as all who had incurred his displeasure experienced to their cost. His plan was to make himself feared; and he was inexorable as fate itself to a creditor. He ever exacted the full penalty of his bond. In this instance, according to his own notion, he had acted with great leniency; and certainly, judged by his customary mode of proceeding in such cases, he had shown some little indulgence. In this line of conduct he had been mainly influenced by his partner, who, not being insensible to the attractions of the fair hostess, hoped to win her favour by a show of consideration. But though Madame Bonaventure was willing enough, for her own purposes, to encourage Sir Francis Mitchell's attentions (she detested him in her secret heart), she by no means relied upon him for security. A more powerful friend was held in reserve, whom she meant to produce at the last moment; and, consequently, she was not so ill at ease as she otherwise would have been, though by no means free from misgiving.

Sir Giles Mompesson was a terrible enemy, and seldom thwarted in his purpose. That she knew. But no man was more keenly alive to his own interest than he; and she persuaded herself he would find it to his advantage not to molest her: in which case she was safe. Of Sir Francis Mitchell she had less apprehension; for, though equally mischievous and malevolent with his partner, he was far feebler of purpose, and for the most part governed by him. Besides, she felt she had

the amorous knight in her toils, and could easily manage him if he were alone.

So the case stood with respect to our pretty hostess; but, before proceeding further, it may be well to give a more complete description of the two birds of prey by whom she was threatened with beak and talon.

The master-spirit of the twain was undoubtedly Sir Giles Mompesson. Quick in conception of villany, he was equally daring in execution. How he had risen to his present bad eminence, no one precisely knew; because, with the craft and subtlety that distinguished him, he laid his schemes so deeply, and covered his proceedings with so thick a veil that they had been rarely detected. Report, however, spoke of him as a usurer of the vilest kind, who wrung exorbitant interest from needy borrowers,—who advanced money to expectant heirs, with the intention of plundering them of their inheritance,—and who resorted to every trick and malpractice permitted by the law to benefit himself at his neighbour's expense. These were bad enough, but even graver accusations were made against him. It was whispered that he had obtained fraudulent possession of deeds and family papers, which had enabled him to wrest estates from their rightful owners; and some did not scruple to add to these charges that he had forged documents to carry out his nefarious designs. Be this as it may, from comparative poverty he speedily rose to wealth; and, as his means increased, so his avaricious schemes were multiplied and extended. His earlier days were passed in complete obscurity, none but the neediest spendthrift or the most desperate gambler knowing where he dwelt; and every one who found him out in his wretched abode near the Marshalsea, had reason to regret his visit. Now he was well enough known by many a courtly prodigal, and his large mansion near Fleet Bridge (it was said of him that he always chose the neighbourhood of a prison for his dwelling) was resorted to by the town gallants, whose necessities or extravagance compelled them to obtain supplies at exorbitant interest. Lavish in his expenditure on occasions, Sir Giles was habitually so greedy and penurious, that he begrudged every tester he expended. He wished to keep up a show of hospitality without cost, and secretly pleased himself by thinking that he made his guests pay for his entertainments, and even for his establishment. His servants complained of being half-starved, though he was constantly at war with them for their wastefulness and riot. He made, however, a great display of attendants, inasmuch as he had a whole retinue of myrmidons at his beck and call; and these, as before observed, were well paid. They were the crows that followed the vultures, and picked the bones of the spoil when their ravening masters had been fully glutted.

In the court of Star-Chamber, as already remarked, Sir Giles

THE LETTERS PATENT.

Mompesson found an instrument in every way fitted to his purposes; and he worked it with terrible effect, as will be shown hereafter. With him it was at once a weapon to destroy, and a shield to protect. This court claimed "a superlative power not only to take causes from other courts and punish them there, but also to punish offences secondarily, when other courts have punished them." Taking advantage of this privilege, when a suit was commenced against him elsewhere, Sir Giles contrived to remove it to the Star-Chamber, where, being omnipotent with clerks and counsel, he was sure of success,—the complaints being so warily contrived, the examinations so adroitly framed, and the interrogatories so numerous and perplexing, that the defendant, or delinquent, as he was indifferently styled, was certain to be baffled and defeated. "The sentences of this court," it has been said by one intimately acquainted with its practice, and very favourably inclined to it, "strike to the root of men's reputations, and many times of their estates;" and, again, it was a rule with it, that the prosecutor "was ever intended to be favoured." Knowing this as well as the high legal authority from whom we have quoted, Sir Giles ever placed himself in the favoured position, and, with the aid of this iniquitous tribunal, blasted many a fair reputation, and consigned many a victim of its injustice to the Fleet, there to rot till he paid him the utmost of his demands, or paid the debt of nature.

In an age less corrupt and venal than that under consideration, such a career could not have long continued without check. But in the time of James the First, from the neediness of the monarch himself, and the rapacity of his minions and courtiers and their satellites—each striving to enrich himself, no matter how—a thousand abuses, both of right and justice, were tolerated or connived at, crime stalking abroad unpunished. The Star-Chamber itself served the king, as, in a less degree, it served Sir Giles Mompesson, and others of the same stamp, as a means of increasing his revenue; half the fines mulcted from those who incurred its censure or its punishments being awarded to the crown. Thus nice inquiries were rarely made, unless a public example was needed, when the wrong-doer was compelled to disgorge his plunder. But this was never done till the pear was fully ripe. Sir Giles, however, had no apprehensions of any such result in his case. Like a sly fox, or rather like a crafty wolf, he was too confident in his own cunning and resources to fear being caught in such a trap.

His title was purchased, and he reaped his reward in the consequence it gave him. Sir Francis Mitchell acted likewise; and it was about this time that the connexion between the worthy pair commenced. Hitherto they had been in opposition, and though very different in temperament and in modes of proceeding, they had one aim in common; and recognising great

merit in each other, coupled with a power of mutual assistance, they agreed to act in concert. Sir Francis was as cautious and timid as Sir Giles was daring and inflexible; the one being the best contriver of a scheme, and the other the fittest to carry it out. Sir Francis trembled at his own devices and their possible consequences: Sir Giles adopted his schemes, if promising, and laughed at the difficulties and dangers that beset them. The one was the head, the other the arm. Not that Sir Giles lacked the ability to weave as subtle a web of deceit as his partner; but each took his line. It saved time. The plan of licensing and inspecting taverns and hotels had originated with Sir Francis, and very profitable it proved. But Sir Giles carried it out much farther than his partner had proposed, or thought prudent.

And they were as different in personal appearance, as in mental qualities and disposition. Mompesson was the dashing eagle, Mitchell the sorry kite. Sir Francis was weakly, emaciated in frame; much given to sensual indulgence; and his body conformed to his timorous organization. His shrunken shanks scarcely sufficed to support him; his back was bent; his eyes blear; his head bald; and his chin, which was continually wagging, clothed with a scanty yellow beard, shaped like a stiletto; while his sandy moustachios were curled upward. He was dressed in the extremity of the fashion, and affected the air of a young court gallant. His doublet, hose, and mantle were ever of the gayest and most fanciful hues, and of the richest stuffs; he wore a diamond brooch in his beaver, and sashes, tied like garters, round his thin legs, which were utterly destitute of calf. Preposterously large roses covered his shoes; his ruff was a "treble-quadruple-dedallion;" his gloves richly embroidered; a large crimson satin purse hung from his girdle; and he was scented with powders and pulvilios. This withered coxcomb affected the mincing gait of a young man; and though rather an object of derision than admiration with the fair sex, persuaded himself they were all captivated by him. The vast sums he so unjustly acquired did not long remain in his possession, but were dispersed in ministering to his follies and depravity. Timorous he was by nature, as we have said, but cruel and unrelenting in proportion to his cowardice; and where an injury could be securely inflicted, or a prostrate foe struck with impunity, he never hesitated for a moment. Sir Giles himself was scarcely so malignant and implacable.

A strong contrast to this dastardly debauchee was offered by the bolder villain. Sir Giles Mompesson was a very handsome man, with a striking physiognomy, but dark and sinister in expression. His eyes were black, singularly piercing, and flashed with the fiercest fire when kindled by passion. A finely-formed aquiline nose gave a hawklike character to his face; his hair was coal-black (though he was no longer young), and hung

in long ringlets over his neck and shoulders. He wore the handsomely-cut beard and moustache subsequently depicted in the portraits of Vandyke, which suited the stern gravity of his countenance. Rich though sober in his attire, he always affected a dark colour, being generally habited in a doublet of black quilted silk, Venetian hose, and a murrey-coloured velvet mantle. His conical hat was ornamented with a single black ostrich feather; and he carried a long rapier by his side, in the use of which he was singularly skilful, being one of Vincentio Saviolo's best pupils. Sir Giles was a little above the middle height, with a well-proportioned, athletic figure; and his strength and address were such, that there seemed good reason for his boast when he declared, as he often did, "that he feared no man living, in fair fight,—no, nor any two men."

Sir Giles had none of the weaknesses of his partner. Temperate in his living, he had never been known to commit an excess at table; nor were the blandishments or lures of the fair sex ever successfully spread for him. If his arm was of iron, his heart seemed of adamant, utterly impenetrable by any gentle emotion. It was affirmed, and believed, that he had never shed a tear. His sole passion appeared to be the accumulation of wealth, unattended by the desire to spend it. He bestowed no gifts. He had no family, no kinsmen, whom he cared to acknowledge. He stood alone—a hard, grasping man,—a bond-slave of Mammon.

When it pleased him, Sir Giles Mompesson could play the courtier, and fawn and gloze like the rest. A consummate hypocrite, he easily assumed any part he might be called upon to enact; but the tone natural to him was one of insolent domination and bitter raillery. He sneered at all things, human and divine; and there was mockery in his laughter, as well as venom in his jests. His manner, however, was not without a certain cold and grave dignity, and he clothed himself, like his purposes, in inscrutable reserve, on occasions requiring it. So ominous was his presence, that many persons got out of his way, fearing to come in contact with him, or give him offence; and the broad walk at Paul's was sometimes cleared as he took his way along it, followed by his band of tipstaves.

If this were the case with persons who had no immediate ground of apprehension from him, how much terror his sombre figure must have inspired when presented, as it was, to Madame Bonaventure, with the aspect of a merciless creditor, armed with full power to enforce his claims, and resolved not to abate a jot of them!

CHAPTER III.

THE FRENCH ORDINARY.

The month allowed by the notice expired, and Madame Bonaventure's day of reckoning arrived.

No arrangement had been attempted in the interim, though abundant opportunities of doing so were afforded her, as Sir Francis Mitchell visited the Three Cranes almost daily. She appeared to treat the matter very lightly, always putting it off when mentioned; and even towards the last seemed quite unconcerned, as if entertaining no fear of the result. Apparently, everything went on just as usual, and no one would have supposed, from Madame Bonaventure's manner, that she was aware of the possibility of a mine being sprung beneath her feet. Perhaps she fancied she had countermined her opponents, and so felt secure. Her indifference puzzled Sir Francis, who knew not whether to attribute it to insensibility or over-confidence. He was curious to see how she would conduct herself when the crisis came; and for that purpose repaired to the tavern, about dinner-time, on the appointed day.

The hostess received him very graciously; trifled and jested with him as was her custom, and looked all blandishments and smiles to him and everybody else, as if nothing could possibly happen to disturb her serenity. Sir Francis was more perplexed than ever. With the levity and heedlessness of a Frenchwoman, she must have forgotten all about the claim. What if he should venture to remind her of it? Better not. The application would come soon enough. He was glad it devolved upon his partner, and not on himself, to proceed to extremities with so charming a person. He really could not do it. And yet all the while he chuckled internally as he thought of the terrible dilemma in which she would be speedily caught, and how completely it would place her at his mercy. She must come to terms then. And Sir Francis rubbed his skinny hands gleefully at the thought. On her part, Madame Bonaventure guessed what was passing in his breast, and secretly enjoyed the idea of checkmating him. With a captivating smile she left him to attend to her numerous guests.

And very numerous they were on that day—more so than usual. Sir Francis, who had brought a boat from Westminster, where he dwelt, experienced some difficulty in landing at the stairs, invested as they were with barges, wherries, and watermen, all of whom had evidently brought customers to the Three Cranes. Besides these, there were two or three gilded pinnaces lying off the wharf, with oarsmen in rich liveries, evidently belonging to persons of rank.

The benches and little tables in front of the tavern were occupied by foreign merchants and traders, discussing their affairs over a stoup of Bordeaux. Others, similarly employed, sat at the open casements in the rooms above; each story projecting so much beyond the other that the old building, crowned with its fanciful gables and heavy chimneys, looked top-heavy, and as if it would roll over into the Thames some day. Others, again, were seated over their wine in the pleasant little chamber built over the porch, which, advancing considerably beyond the door, afforded a delightful prospect, from its lantern-like windows, of the river, now sparkling with sunshine (it was a bright May-day), and covered with craft, extending on the one hand to Baynard's Castle, and on the other to the most picturesque object to be found then, or since, in London—the ancient Bridge, with its towers, gateways, lofty superstructures, and narrow arches, through which the current dashed swiftly; and, of course, commanding a complete view of the opposite bank, beginning with Saint Saviour's fine old church, Winchester House, the walks, gardens, and play-houses, and ending with the fine groves of timber skirting Lambeth Marshes. Others repaired to the smooth and well-kept bowling alley in the narrow court at the back of the house, where there was a mulberry-tree two centuries older than the tavern itself—to recreate themselves with the healthful pastime there afforded, and indulge at the same time in a few whiffs of tobacco, which, notwithstanding the king's fulminations against it, had already made its way among the people.

The ordinary was held in the principal room in the house; which was well enough adapted for the purpose, being lofty and spacious, and lighted by an oriel window at the upper end. Over the high carved chimney-piece were the arms of the Vintners' Company, sable, a chevron cetu, three tuns argent, with a Bacchus for a crest. The ceiling was moulded, and the wainscots of oak; against the latter several paintings were hung. One of these represented the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, and another the triumphal entry of Henri IV. into rebellious Paris. Besides these, there were portraits of the reigning monarch, James the First; the Marquis of Buckingham, his favourite; and the youthful Louis XIII., King of France. A long table generally ran down the centre of the room; but on this occasion there was a raised cross-table at the upper end, with a traverse, or curtain, partially drawn before it, proclaiming the presence of important guests. Here the napery was finer, and the drinking-vessels handsomer, than those used at the lower board. A grand banquet seemed taking place. Long-necked flasks were placed in coolers, and the buffets were covered with flagons and glasses. The table groaned beneath the number and variety of dishes set upon it. In addition to the customary yeomen-waiters, there

were a host of serving-men in rich and varied liveries; but these attended exclusively on their lords at the raised table, behind the traverse.

As Sir Francis was ushered into the eating-room, he was quite taken aback by the unusually magnificent display, and felt greatly surprised that no hint of the banquet had been given him, on his arrival, by the hostess. The feast had already commenced; and all the yeomen-waiters and trencher-scrapers were too busily occupied to attend to him. Cyprien, who marshalled the dishes at the lower table, did not deign to notice him, and was deaf to his demand for a place. It seemed probable he would not obtain one at all; and he was about to retire, much disconcerted, when a young man, somewhat plainly habited, and who seemed a stranger to all present, very good-naturedly made room for him. In this way he was squeezed in.

Sir Francis then cast a look round to ascertain who were present; but he was so inconveniently situated, and the crowd of serving-men was so great at the upper table, that he could only imperfectly distinguish those seated at it; besides which, most of the guests were hidden by the traverse. Such, however, as he could make out were richly attired in doublets of silk and satin, while their rich velvet mantles, plumed and jewelled caps, and long rapiers, were carried by their servants.

Two or three turned round to look at him as he sat down; and amongst these he remarked Sir Edward Villiers, whose presence was far from agreeable to him—for though Sir Edward was secretly connected with him and Sir Giles, and took tithe of their spoliations, he disowned them in public, and would assuredly not countenance any open display of their rapacious proceedings.

Another personage whom he recognised, from his obesity, the peculiarity of his long flowing periwig, and his black velvet Parisian pourpoint, which contrasted forcibly with the glittering habiliments of his companions, was Doctor Mayerne-Turquet, the celebrated French professor of medicine, then so high in favour with James, that, having been loaded with honours and dignities, he had been recently named the King's first physician. Doctor Mayerne's abilities were so distinguished, that his Protestant faith alone prevented him from occupying the same eminent position in the court of France that he did in that of England. The doctor's presence at the banquet was unpropitious; it was natural that he should befriend a countrywoman, and a Huguenot like himself, and possessing the royal ear, he might make such representations as he pleased to the King of what should occur. Sir Francis hoped he would be gone before Sir Giles appeared.

But there was yet a third person, who gave the usurious knight more uneasiness than the other two This was a handsome

young man, with fair hair and delicate features, whose slight elegant figure was arrayed in a crimson satin doublet, slashed with white, and hose of the same colours and fabric. The young nobleman in question, whose handsome features and prematurely-wasted frame bore the impress of cynicism and debauchery, was Lord Roos, then recently entrapped into marriage with the daughter of Sir Thomas Lake, Secretary of State: a marriage productive of the usual consequences of such imprudent arrangements—neglect on the one side, unhappiness on the other. Lord Roos was Sir Francis's sworn enemy. Like many other such gay moths, he had been severely singed by fluttering into the dazzling lights held up to him, when he wanted money, by the two usurers; and he had often vowed revenge against them for the manner in which they had fleeced him. Sir Francis did not usually give any great heed to his threats, being too much accustomed to reproaches and menaces from his victims to feel alarm or compunction; but just now the case was different, and he could not help fearing the vindictive young lord might seize the opportunity of serving him an ill turn—if, indeed, he had not come there expressly for the purpose, which seemed probable, from the fierce and disdainful glances he cast at him.

An angry murmur pervaded the upper table on Sir Francis's appearance; and something was said which, though he could not gather its precise import, did not sound agreeably to his ears. He felt he had unwittingly brought his head near a hornet's nest, and might esteem himself lucky if he escaped without stinging. However, there was no retreating now; for though his fear counselled flight, very shame restrained him.

The repast was varied and abundant, consisting of all kinds of fricassees, collops and rashers, boiled salmon from the Thames, trout and pike from the same river, boiled pea-chickens and turkey-poults, and florentines of puff paste, calf's-foot pies, and set custards. Between each guest a boiled salad was placed, which was nothing more than what we should term a dish of vegetables, except that the vegetables were somewhat differently prepared; cinnamon, ginger, and sugar being added to the pulped carrots, besides a handful of currants, vinegar, and butter. A similar plan was adopted with the salads of burrage, chicory, marigold leaves, bugloss, asparagus, rocket, and alexanders, and many other plants discontinued in modern cookery, but then much esteemed; oil and vinegar being used with some, and spices with all; while each dish was garnished with slices of hard-boiled eggs. A jowl of sturgeon was carried to the upper table, where there was also a baked swan, and a roasted bustard, flanked by two stately venison pasties. This was only the first service; and two others followed, consisting of a fawn with a pudding inside it, a grand salad, hot olive pies, baked neat's tongues, fried calves' tongues, baked Italian pudding, a farced

leg of lamb in the French fashion, orangeado pie, buttered crabs, anchovies, and a plentiful supply of little made dishes, and *quelquechoses*, scattered over the table. With such a profusion of good things, it may appear surprising that Sir Francis should find very little to eat; but the attendants all seemed in league against him, and whenever he set his eye upon a dish, it was sure to be placed out of reach. Sir Francis was a great epicure, and the Thames salmon looked delicious; but he would have failed in obtaining a slice of it, if his neighbour (the young man who had made room for him) had not given him the well-filled trencher intended for himself. In the same way he secured the wing of a boiled capon, larded with preserved lemons, the sauce of which was exquisite, as he well knew from experience. Cyprien, however, took care he should get none of the turkey-poults or the florentines, but whipped off both dishes from under his very nose; and a like fate would have attended a lumbar pie but for the interference of his good-natured neighbour, who again came to his aid, and rescued it from the clutches of the saucy Gascon, just as it was being borne away.

CHAPTER IV.

A STAR-CHAMBER VICTIM.

His hunger being somewhat stayed, Sir Francis now found leisure to consider the young man who had so greatly befriended him, and, as a means of promoting conversation between them, began by filling his glass from a flask of excellent Bordeaux, of which, in spite of Cyprien's efforts to prevent him, he had contrived to gain possession. The young man acknowledged his courtesy with a smile, praised the wine, and expressed his astonishment at the wonderful variety and excellence of the repast, for which he said he was quite unprepared. It was not Sir Francis's way to feel or express much interest in strangers, and he disliked young men, especially when they were handsome, as was the case with his new acquaintance; but there was something in the youth that riveted his attention.

From the plainness of his attire, and a certain not unpleasing rusticity of air, Sir Francis comprehended at once that he was fresh from the country; but he also felt satisfied, from his bearing and deportment, that he was a gentleman: a term not quite so vaguely applied then, as it is now-a-days. The youth had a fine frank countenance, remarkable for manly beauty and intelligence, and a figure perfectly proportioned and athletic. Sir Francis set him down as well skilled in all exercises; vaulting, leaping, riding, and tossing the pike; nor was he mistaken. He

also concluded him to be fond of country sports; and he was right in the supposition. He further imagined the young man had come to town to better his fortune, and seek a place at court; and he was not far wrong in the notion. As the wily knight scanned the handsome features of his companion, his clean-made limbs, and symmetrical figure, he thought that success must infallibly attend the production of such a fair youth at a court, where personal advantages were the first consideration.

"A likely gallant," he reflected, "to take the fancy of the King; and if I aid him with means to purchase rich attire, and procure him a presentation, he may not prove ungrateful. But of that I shall take good security. I know what gratitude is. He must be introduced to my Lady Suffolk. She will know how to treat him. In the first place, he must cast his country slough. That ill-made doublet of green cloth must be exchanged for one of velvet, slashed in the Venetian style, like mine own, with hose stuffed and bombasted according to the mode. A silk stocking will bring out the nice proportions of his leg; though, as I am a true gentleman, the youth has so well-formed a limb that even his own villanous yarn coverings cannot disfigure it. His hair is of a good brown colour, which the King affects much, and seems to curl naturally; but it wants trimming to the mode, for he is rough as a young colt fresh from pasture; and though he hath not much beard on his chin or upper lip, yet what he hath becomes him well, and will become him better, when properly clipped and twisted. Altogether he is as goodly a youth as one would desire to see. What if he should supplant Buckingham, as Buckingham supplanted Somerset? Let the proud Marquis look to himself! We may work his overthrow yet. And now to question him."

After replenishing his glass, Sir Francis addressed himself in his blandest accents, and with his most insidious manner, to his youthful neighbour:—

"For a stranger to town, as I conclude you to be, young sir," he said, "you have made rather a lucky hit in coming hither to-day, since you have not only got a better dinner than I (a constant frequenter of this French ordinary) ever saw served here—(though the attendance is abominable, as you must have remarked—that rascally Cyprien deserves the bastinado); but your civility and good manners have introduced you to one who may, without presumption, affirm that he hath the will, and, it may be, the ability to serve you; if you will only point out to him the way."

"Nay, worthy sir, you are too kind," the young man modestly replied; "I have done nothing to merit your good opinion, though I am happy to have gained it. I rejoice that accident has so far befriended me as to bring me here on this festive

occasion; and I rejoice yet more that it has brought me acquainted with a worthy gentleman like yourself, to whom my rustic manners prove not to be displeasing. I have too few friends to neglect any that chance may offer; and as I must carve my own way in the world, and fight for a position in it, I gladly accept any hand that may be stretched out to help me in the struggle."

"Just as I would have it," Sir Francis thought; "the very man I took him for.—As I am a true gentleman, mine shall not be wanting, my good youth," he added aloud, with apparent cordiality, and affecting to regard the other with great interest; "and when I learn the particular direction in which you intend to shape your course, I shall be the better able to advise and guide you. There are many ways to fortune."

"Mine should be the shortest if I had any choice," the young man rejoined, with a smile.

"Right, quite right," the crafty knight returned. "All men would take that road if they could find it. But with some the shortest road would not be the safest. In your case I think it might be different. You have a sufficiently good mien, and a sufficiently good figure, to serve you in lieu of other advantages."

"Your fair speech would put me in conceit with myself, worthy sir," the young man rejoined, with a well-pleased air, "were I not too conscious of my own demerits, not to impute what you say of me to good-nature, or to flattery."

"There you wrong me, my good young friend—on my credit you do. Were I to resort to adulation, I must strain the points of compliment to find phrases that could come up to my opinion of your good looks; and as to my friendly disposition towards you, I have already said that your attentions have won it, so that mere good-nature does not prompt my words. I speak of you as I think. May I, without appearing too inquisitive, ask from what part of the country you come?"

"I am from Norfolk, worthy sir," the young man answered, "where my life has been spent among a set of men wild and uncouth, and fond of the chase as the Sherwood archers we read of in the ballads. I am the son of a broken gentleman; the lord of a ruined house; with one old servant left me out of fifty kept by my father, and with scarce a hundred acres that I can still call my own, out of the thousands swept away from me. Still I hunt in my father's woods; kill my father's deer; and fish in my father's lakes; since no one molests me. And I keep up the little church near the old tumble-down hall, in which are the tombs of my ancestors, and where my father lies buried; and the tenantry come there yet on Sundays, though I am no longer their master; and my father's old chaplain, Sir Oliver, still preaches there, though my father's son can no longer maintain him."

"A sad change, truly," Sir Francis said, in a tone of sympathy, and with a look of well-feigned concern, "and attributable, I much fear, to riot and profusion on the part of your father, who so beggared his son."

"Not so, sir," the young man gravely replied; "my father was a most honourable man, and would have injured no one, much less the son on whom he doted. Neither was he profuse; but he lived bountifully and well, as a country gentleman, with a large estate, should live. The cause of his ruin was, that he came within the clutches of that devouring monster, which, like the insatiate dragon of Rhodes, has swallowed up the substance of so many families that our land is threatened with desolation. My father was ruined by that court, which, with a mockery of justice, robs men of their name, their fame, their lands, and goods; which perverts the course of law, and saps the principles of equity; which favours the knave and oppresses the honest man; which promotes and supports extortion and plunder; which reverses righteous judgments, and asserts its own unrighteous supremacy; which, by means of its commissioners, spreads its hundred arms over the whole realm, to pillage and destroy—so that no one, however distant, can keep out of its reach, or escape its supervision; and which, if it be not uprooted, will, in the end, overthrow the kingdom. Need I say my father was ruined by the Star-Chamber?"

"Hush! hush! my good young sir," Sir Francis cried, having vainly endeavoured to interrupt his companion's angry denunciation. "Pray heaven your words have reached no other ears than mine! To speak of the Star-Chamber as you have spoken is worse than treason. Many a man has lost his ears, and been branded on the brow, for half you have uttered."

"Is free speech denied in this free country?" the young man cried, in astonishment. "Must one suffer grievous wrong, and not complain?"

"Certes, you must not contemn the Star-Chamber, or you will incur its censure," Sir Francis replied, in a low tone. "No court in England is so jealous of its prerogatives, nor so severe in punishment of its maligners. It will not have its proceedings canvassed, or its judgments questioned."

"For the plain reason, that it knows they will not bear investigation or discussion. Such is the practice of all arbitrary and despotic rule. But will Englishmen submit to such tyranny?"

"Again, let me counsel you to put a bridle on your tongue, young sir. Such matters are not to be talked of at public tables —scarcely in private. It is well you have addressed yourself to one who will not betray you. The Star-Chamber hath its spies everywhere. Meddle not with it, as you value liberty. Light provocation arouses its anger; and once aroused, its wrath is all-consuming."

CHAPTER V.

JOCELYN MOUNCHENSEY.

NOTWITHSTANDING the risk incurred, the young man, whose feelings were evidently deeply interested, seemed disposed to pursue the dangerous theme; but, perceiving one of their opposite neighbours glancing at them, Sir Francis checked him and filling his glass, essayed to change the conversation, by inquiring how long he had been in town, and where he lodged.

"I only arrived in London yesterday," was the reply, "yet I have been here long enough to make me loath to return to the woods and moors of Norfolk. As to my lodging, it is without the city walls, near St. Botolph's Church, and within a bow-shot of Aldgate: a pleasant situation enough, looking towards the Spital Fields and the open country. I would fain have got me others in the Strand, or near Charing Cross, if my scanty means would have allowed me. Chance, as I have said, brought me here to-day. Strolling forth early to view the sights of town, I crossed London Bridge, the magnificence of which amazed me; and, proceeding along the Bankside, entered Paris Garden, of which I had heard much, and where I was greatly pleased, both with the mastiffs kept there, and the formidable animals they have to encounter, and methought I should like to bait mine enemies with those savage dogs, instead of the bear. Returning to the opposite shore in a wherry, the waterman landed me at this wharf, and so highly commended the Three Cranes, as affording the best French ordinary and the best French wine in London, that seeing many gentlefolk flocking towards it, which seemed to confirm his statement, I came in with them, and have reason to be satisfied with my entertainment, never having dined so sumptuously before, and certes, never having tasted wine so delicious."

"Let me fill your glass again. As I am a true gentleman, it will not hurt you; a singular merit of pure Bordeaux being that you may drink it with impunity; and the like cannot be said of your sophisticated sack. We will crush another flask. Ho! drawer—Cyprien, I say! More wine—and of the best Bordeaux. The best, I say."

And, for a wonder, the order was obeyed, and the flask set before him.

"You have been at the Bankside you say, young sir? On my credit, you must cross the river again and visit the theatres —the Globe or the Rose. Our great actor, Dick Burbadge, plays Othello to-day, and, I warrant me, he will delight you. A little man is Dick, but he hath a mighty soul. There is none other like him, whether it be Nat Field or Ned Alleyn. Our

famous Shakespeare is fortunate, I trow, in having him to play his great characters. You must see Burbadge, likewise, in the mad Prince of Denmark,—the part was written for him, and fits him exactly. See him also in gentle and love-sick Romeo, in tyrannous and murderous Macbeth, and in crookback Richard; in all of which, though different, our Dick is equally good. He hath some other parts of almost equal merit,—as Malevole, in the 'Malcontent;' Frankford, in the 'Woman Killed with Kindness;' Brachiano, in Webster's 'White Devil;' and Vendice, in Cyril Tournour's 'Revenger's Tragedy.'"

"I know not what may be the nature of that last-named play," the young man rather sternly remarked, "but if the character of Vendice at all bears out its name, it would suit me. I am an avenger."

"Forbear your wrongs awhile, I pray you, and drown your resentment in a cup of wine. As I am a true gentleman! a better bottle than the first! Nay, taste it. On my credit, it is perfect nectar. I pledge you in a brimmer; wishing Success may attend you, and Confusion await your Enemies! May you speedily regain your rights!"

"I drink that toast most heartily, worthy sir," the young man exclaimed, raising his beaded flagon on high. "Confusion to my Enemies—Restoration to my Rights!"

And he drained the goblet to its last drop.

"By this time he must be in a fit mood for my purpose," Sir Francis thought, as he watched him narrowly. "Harkye, my good young friend," he said, lowering his tone, "I would not be overheard in what I have to say. You were speaking just now of the shortest way to fortune. I will point it out to you. To him who is bold enough to take it, and who hath the requisites for the venture, the shortest way is to be found at court. Where think you most of those gallants, of whom you may catch a glimpse through the traverse, derive their revenues! —As I am a true gentleman!—from the royal coffers. Not many years ago with all of them—not many months ago with some—those brilliant and titled coxcombs were adventurers like yourself, having barely a Jacobus in their purses, and scarce credit for board and lodging with their respective landladies. Now you see how nobly they feast, and how richly they bedeck themselves. On my credit! the like good fortune may attend you; and haply, when I dine at an ordinary a year hence, I may perceive you at the upper table, with a curtain before you to keep off the meaner company, and your serving-man at your back, holding your velvet mantle and cap, like the best of your fellow-nobles."

"Heaven grant it may be so!" the young man exclaimed, with a sigh. "You hold a dazzling picture before me; but I have little expectation of realizing it."

"It will be your own fault if you do not," the tempter rejoined. "You are equally well-favoured with the handsomest of them; and it was by good looks alone that the whole party rose to their present eminence. Why not pursue the same course, with the same certainty of success? You have courage enough to undertake it, I presume?"

"If courage alone were wanting, I have that," the young man replied;—"but I am wholly unknown in town. How then shall I accomplish an introduction at court, when I know not even its humblest attendant?"

"I have already said you were lucky in meeting with me," Sir Francis replied, "and I find you were luckier than I supposed, when I told you so; for I knew not then towards what bent your desires tended, nor in what way I could help you; but now, finding out the boldness of your flight, and the high game you aim at, I am able to offer you effectual assistance, and give you an earnest of a prosperous issue. Through my means you shall be presented to the King, and in such sort that the presentation shall not be idly made. It will rest then with yourself to play your cards dexterously, and to follow up a winning game. Doubtless, you will have many adversaries, who will trip up your heels if they can, and throw every obstacle in your way; but if you possess the strong arm I fancy you do, and daring to second it, you have nothing to fear. As I am a true gentleman! you shall have good counsel, and a friend in secret to back you."

"To whom am I indebted for this most gracious and unlooked-for offer?" the young man asked, his breast heaving and his eye flashing with excitement.

"To one you may perchance have heard of," the knight answered, "as the subject of some misrepresentation; how justly applied, you yourself will be able to determine from my present conduct. I am Sir Francis Mitchell."

At the mention of this name the young man started, and a deep angry flush overspread his face and brow.

Perceiving the effect produced, the wily knight hastened to remove it.

"My name, I see, awakens unpleasant associations in your breast," he said, "and your look shows you have been influenced by the calumnies of my enemies. I do not blame you. Men can only be judged of by report; and those I have had dealings with have reported ill enough of me. But they have spoken falsely. I have done no more than any other person would do. I have obtained the best interest I could for my money; and my losses have been almost equal to my gains. Folks are ready enough to tell all they can against you; but slow to mention aught they conceive to be in your favour. They stigmatize me as a usurer; but they forget to add, I am ever the

friend of those in need. They use me, and abuse me. That is the way of the world. Wherefore, then, should I complain? I am no worse off than my neighbours. And the proof that I can be disinterested is the way in which I have acted towards you, a perfect stranger, and who have no other recommendation to my good offices than your gracious mien and gentle manners."

"I cannot accept your proffered aid, Sir Francis," the young man replied, in an altered tone, and with great sternness. "And you will understand why I cannot, when I announce myself to you as Jocelyn Mounchensey."

It was now the knight's turn to start, change colour, and tremble.

CHAPTER VI.

PROVOCATION.

A MOMENTARY pause ensued, during which Mounchensey regarded the knight so fiercely, that the latter began to entertain apprehensions for his personal safety, and meditated a precipitate retreat. Yet he did not dare to move, lest the action should bring upon him the hurt he wished to avoid. Thus he remained, like a bird fascinated by the rattlesnake, until the young man, whose power of speech seemed taken from him by passion, went on, in a tone of deep and concentrated rage, that communicated a hissing sound to his words.

"Yes, I am Jocelyn Mounchensey," he said, "the son of him whom your arts and those of your partner in iniquity, Sir Giles Mompesson, brought to destruction; the son of him whom you despoiled of a good name and large estates, and cast into a loathsome prison, to languish and to die; I am the son of that murdered man. I am he whom you have robbed of his inheritance; whose proud escutcheon you have tarnished; whose family you have reduced to beggary and utter ruin."

"But Sir Jocelyn, my worthy friend," the knight faltered, "have patience, I pray of you. If you consider yourself aggrieved, I am willing to make reparation—ample reparation. You know what were my intentions towards you, before I had the slightest notion who you might be. (If I had but been aware of it, he thought, I would have taken care to keep at a respectful distance from him.) I will do more than I promised. I will lend you any sums of money you may require; and on your personal security. Your bare word shall suffice. No bonds—no written obligations of any kind. Does that sound like usury? As I am a true gentleman! I am most unfairly judged. I am not the extortioner men describe me. You shall find me your friend," he added, in a low, earnest tone. "I will re-establish

your fortune; give you a new title, higher and prouder than that which you have lost; and, if you will follow my counsel, you shall supplant the haughty favourite himself. You shall stand where Buckingham now stands. Hear reason, good Sir Jocelyn. Hear reason, I entreat you."

"I will hear nothing further," Jocelyn rejoined. "Were you to talk till Doomsday, you could not alter my feelings towards you a jot. My chief errand in coming to London was to call you and Sir Giles Mompesson to strict account."

"And we will answer any charges you may bring against us readily—most readily, Sir Jocelyn. All was done in fairness—according to law. The Star-Chamber will uphold us."

"Tut! you think to terrify me with that bugbear; but I am not so easily frightened. We have met for the first time by chance, but our next meeting shall be by appointment."

"When and where you please, Sir Jocelyn," the knight replied; "but recollect the duello is forbidden, and, though I would not willingly disappoint you in your desire to cut my throat, I should be sorry to think you might be hanged for it afterwards. Come, Sir Jocelyn, lay aside this idle passion, and look to your true interests, which lie, not in quarrelling with me, but in our reconciliation. I can help you effectually, as I have shown; and, as I am a true gentleman, I *will* help you. Give me your hand, and let us be friends!"

"Never!" Jocelyn exclaimed, withdrawing from him, "never shall the hand of a Mounchensey grasp yours in friendship! I would sooner mine rotted off! I am your mortal foe. My father's death has to be avenged."

"Provoke him not, my good young sir," interposed an elderly man, next him, in a long furred gown, with hanging sleeves, and a flat cap on his head, who had heard what was now passing. "You know not the mischief he may do you."

"I laugh at his malice, and defy him," Jocelyn cried; "he shall not sit one moment longer beside me. Out, knave! out!" he added, seizing Sir Francis by the wing of his doublet, and forcibly thrusting him from his seat. "You are not fit company for honest men. Ho! varlets, to the door with him! Throw him into the kennel."

"You shall rue this, villain!—you shall rue it bitterly," Sir Francis cried, shaking his clenched hands at him. "Your father perished like a dog in the Fleet, and you shall perish there likewise. You have put yourself wholly in my power, and I will make a fearful example of you. You have dared to utter scandalous and contemptuous language against the great and High Court of Star-Chamber, before the decrees of which all men bow; impugning its justice and denying its authority; and you shall feel the full weight of its displeasure. I call upon these worthy gentlemen to testify against you."

"We have heard nothing, and can testify nothing," several voices cried.

"But you, sir, who were next him, you must have heard him?" Sir Francis said, addressing the elderly man in the furred gown.

"Not I!" rejoined the person appealed to; "I gave no heed to what was said."

"But I did, Sir Francis," squeaked a little whey-faced man, in a large ruff and tight-laced yellow doublet, from the opposite side of the table; "I heard him most audaciously vilipend the High Court of Star-Chamber and its councils; and I will bear testimony against him when called upon."

"Your name, good sir, your name?" Sir Francis demanded, taking out his tablets.

"Set me down as Thopas Trednock, tailor, at the sign of the Pressing Iron, in Cornhill," the whey-faced man replied, in his shrill tones, amid the derisive laughter of the assemblage.

"Thopas Trednock, tailor—good!" the knight repeated, as he wrote the name down. "You will be an excellent witness, Master Trednock. Fare you well for the present, *Master* Jocelyn Mounchensey, for I now mind well your father was degraded from the honour of knighthood. As I am a true gentleman! you may be sure of committal to the Fleet."

As may be supposed, the scuffle which had taken place attracted the attention of those in its immediate vicinity; and when the cause of it became known, as it presently did throughout both tables, great indignation was expressed against Sir Francis, who was censured on all hands, jeered and flouted, as he moved to the door. So great was the clamour, and so opprobrious were the epithets and terms applied to him, that the knight was eager to make his escape; but he met Cyprien in his way; and the droll young Gascon, holding a dish-cover in one hand, by way of buckler, and a long carving-knife in the other, in place of a sword, opposed his egress.

"Let me pass, knave," Sir Francis cried, in alarm.

"By your leave, no," returned Cyprien, encouraged by the laughter and plaudits of the company. "You have come hither uninvited, and must stay till you have permission to depart. Having partaken of the banquet, you must, perforce, tarry for the rerebanquet. The sweets and cates have yet to come, Sir Francis."

"What mean you, sirrah?" the knight demanded, in increased trepidation.

"Your presence is necessary at a little entertainment I have provided to follow the dinner, sweet Sir Francis," Madame Bonaventure cried, advancing towards him; "and as you have a principal part in it, I can by no means spare you."

"No one can spare you, sweet Sir Francis," several voices chimed in, derisively. "You must remain with us a little longer."

"But I will not stay. I will not be detained. There is some conspiracy a-foot against me. I will indict you all for it, if you hinder me in going forth," the knight vociferated, in accents of mingled rage and terror. "Stop me at your peril, thou saucy Gascon knave."

"*Cornes du diable!*—no more a knave than yourself, *gros usurier!*" Cyprien cried.

"*Laissez-lui*, Cyprien," Madame Bonaventure interposed;—"the courteous knight will yield to my entreaties, and stay of his own free will."

"I have business that calls me hence. I must go," Sir Francis said, endeavouring to push by them.

"Let the door be closed," an authoritative voice cried from the head of the table.

The order was instantly obeyed. Two serving-men stationed themselves before the place of exit, and Sir Francis found himself a prisoner.

The roof rang with the laughter and gibes of the guests.

"This is a frolic, gentlemen, I perceive. You are resolved to make me your sport—ha! ha!" Sir Francis said, trying to disguise his uneasiness under an appearance of levity—"but you will not carry the jest too far. You will not maltreat me. My partner, Sir Giles Mompesson, will be here anon, and will requite any outrage committed upon me."

"Sir Giles is impatiently expected by us," a spruce coxcomb near him replied. "Madame Bonaventure had prepared us for his coming. We will give him the welcome he deserves."

"Ah! traitress! then it was all planned," Sir Francis thought;—"and, blind owl that I am, I have fallen into the snare."

But the poor knight was nearly at his wit's end with fright, when he saw Lord Roos quit his place at the upper table and approach him.

CHAPTER VII.

LORD ROOS.

"WHAT, my prince of usurers!" exclaimed Lord Roos, in a mocking tone—"my worthy money-lender, who never takes more than cent. per cent., and art ill content with less; who never exacts more than the penatly of thy bond—unless more may be got; who never drives a hard bargain with a needy man—by thine own account; who never persecutes a debtor—as the prisons shall vouch for thee; who art just in all thy transactions—as every man who hath had dealings with thee will affirm; and who knows not how to lie, to cheat, to cozen—as some usurers do."

"You are pleasant, my lord," Sir Francis replied.

"I mean to be so," Lord Roos said: "for I esteem thee for thy rare qualities. I know not thy peer for cunning and knavery. Thy mischievous schemes are so well conceived that they prove thee to have an absolute genius for villany. Scruples thou hast none; and considerations and feelings which might move men less obdurate than thyself, have no influence over thee. To ruin a man is with thee mere pastime; and groans of the oppressed are music in thine ears."

"Aha! a good jest. You were always merry with me, my lord."

"Yes, when I borrowed money from thee—but not when I had to repay it twice over. I laughed not then; but was foolish enough to threaten to take thy life. My anger is past now. But we must drink together—a rousing toast."

"At your lordship's pleasure," Sir Francis replied.

"Cyprien! a flask of wine, and thy largest goblet," Lord Roos cried. "'Tis well! Now pour the whole into the flagon. Do me reason in this cup, Sir Francis!"

"What! in this mighty cup, my lord?" the knight replied. "Nay, 'tis too much, I swear. If I become drunken, the sin will lie at your door."

"Off with it! without more ado. And let the toast be what thou practisest—'Pillage and Extortion!'"

"I cannot drink that toast, my lord. 'Twill choke me."

"'Sdeath! villain, but thou *shalt*, or thou shalt never taste wine more. Down with it, man! And now your signature to this paper!"

"My signature!" Sir Francis cried, reeling from the effect of the wine he had swallowed. "Nay, my good lord, I can sign nothing that I have not read. What is it?"

"A blank sheet," Lord Roos rejoined. "I will fill it up afterwards."

"Then, my lord, I refuse—that is, I decline—that is, I had rather not, if your lordship pleases."

"But my lordship pleases otherwise. Give him pen and ink, and set him near the table."

This was done; and Sir Francis regarded the paper with swimming eyes.

"Now, your name—written near the bottom of the sheet," Lord Roos cried.

"'Tis done under com—compulsion; and I pro—protest against it."

"Sign, I say," the young nobleman exclaimed, rapping the table peremptorily.

On this, Sir Francis wrote his name in the place indicated.

"Enough!" Lord Roos cried, snatching up the paper. "This is all I want. Now set him on the table, that his partner may

have him in full view when he arrives. 'Twill give him a foretaste of what he may himself expect."

"What mean you, ruff—ruffians? 'Tis an indignity to which I shall not submit," cried Sir Francis, who was now, however, too far gone to offer any resistance.

A leathern girdle was found, with which he was fastened to the chair, so as to prevent him slipping from it; and in this state he was hoisted upon the table, and set with his face to the door; looking the very picture of inebriety, with his head drooping on one side, his arms dangling uselessly down, and his thin legs stretched idly out. After making some incoherent objections to this treatment, he became altogether silent, and seemed to fall asleep. His elevation was received with shouts of laughter from the whole company.

The incident had not taken place many minutes, and a round had scarcely been drunk by the guests, when a loud and peremptory summons was heard at the door. The noise roused even the poor drunkard in the chair, who, lifting up his head, stared about him with vacant eyes.

"Let the door be opened," the same authoritative voice exclaimed, which had before ordered its closure.

The mandate was obeyed; and, amidst profound silence, which suddenly succeeded the clashing of glasses and expressions of hilarity, Sir Giles Mompesson entered, with his body-guard of myrmidons behind him.

Habited in black, as was his custom, with a velvet mantle on his shoulder, and a long rapier by his side, he came forward with a measured step and assured demeanour. Though he must necessarily have been surprised by the assemblage he found—so much more numerous and splendid than he could have anticipated—he betrayed no signs whatever of embarrassment. Nor, though his quick eye instantly detected Sir Francis, and he guessed at once why the poor knight had been so scandalously treated, did he exhibit any signs of displeasure, or take the slightest notice of the circumstance; reserving this point for consideration when his first business should be settled. An additional frown might have darkened his countenance; but it was so stern and sombre without it, that no perceptible change could be discerned, unless it might be in the lightning glances he cast around, as if seeking some one he might call to account presently for the insult. But no one seemed willing to reply to the challenge. Though bold enough before he came, and boastful of what they would do, they all looked awed by his presence, and averted their gaze from him. There was, indeed, something so formidable in the man, that to shun a quarrel with him was more a matter of prudence than an act of cowardice; and on the present occasion, no one liked to be first to provoke him: trusting to his neighbour to commence the attack, or awaiting the general outbreak.

There was one exception, however, and that was Jocelyn Mounchensey, who, so far from desiring to shun Sir Giles's searching regards, courted them; and as the knight's eagle eye ranged round the table and fell upon him, the young man (notwithstanding the efforts of his pacific neighbour in the furred cloak to restrain him) suddenly rose up, and throwing all the scorn and defiance he could muster into his countenance, returned Mompesson's glance with one equally fierce and menacing.

A bitter smile curled Sir Giles's lip at this reply to his challenge, and he regarded the young man fixedly, as if to grave his features upon his memory. Perhaps they brought Mounchensey's father to mind, for Sir Giles withdrew his gaze for a moment to reflect, and then looked again at Jocelyn with fresh curiosity. If he had any doubts as to whom he beheld, they were removed by Sir Francis, who managed to hiccup forth—

"'Tis he, Sir Giles—'tis Jocelyn Mounchensey."

"I thought as much," Sir Giles muttered. "A moment, young man," he cried, waving his hand imperiously to his antagonist. "Your turn will come presently."

And without bestowing further notice on Jocelyn, who resisted all his neighbour's entreaties to him to sit down, Sir Giles advanced towards the middle of the chamber, where he paused, and took off his cap, having hitherto remained covered.

In this position, he looked like a grand inquisitor attended by his familiars.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF LUPO VULP, CAPTAIN BLUDDER, CLEMENT LANYERE, AND SIR GILES'S OTHER MYRMIDONS.

Close behind Sir Giles, and a little in advance of the rest of the myrmidons, stood Lupo Vulp, the scrivener.

Lupo Vulp was the confidential adviser of our two extortioners, to whom they referred all their nefarious projects. He it was who prepared their bonds and contracts, and placed out their ill-gotten gains at exorbitant usance. Lupo Vulp was in all respects worthy of his employers, being just as wily and unscrupulous as they were, while, at the same time, he was rather better versed in legal tricks and stratagems, so that he could give them apt counsel in any emergency. A countenance more replete with cunning and knavery than that of Lupo Vulp it would be difficult to discover. A sardonic smile hovered perpetually about his mouth, which was garnished with ranges of the keenest and whitest teeth. His features were sharp; his eyes small, set wide apart, of a light grey colour, and with all the slyness of a fox

lurking within their furtive glances. Indeed, his general resemblance to that astute animal must have struck a physiognomist. His head was shaped like that of a fox, and his hair and beard were of a reddish-tawny hue. His manner was stealthy, cowering, suspicious, as if he feared a blow from every hand. Yet Lupo Vulp could show his teeth and snap on occasions. He was attired in a close-fitting doublet of russety-brown, round yellow hose, and long stockings of the same hue. A short brown mantle and a fox-skin cap completed his costume.

The leader of the troop was Captain Bludder, a huge Alsatian bully, with fiercely-twisted moustachios, and fiery-red beard cut like a spade. He wore a steeple-crowned hat with a brooch in it, a buff jerkin and boots, and a sword and buckler dangled from his waist. Besides these, he had a couple of petronels stuck in his girdle. The captain drank like a fish, and swaggered and swore like twenty troopers.

The rear of the band was formed by the tipstaves—stout fellows with hooks at the end of their poles, intended to capture a fugitive, or hale him along when caught. With these were some others armed with brown-bills. No uniformity prevailed in the accoutrements of the party, each man arraying himself as he listed. Some wore old leather jerkins and steel skirts; some, peascod doublets of Elizabeth's time, and trunk-hose that had covered many a limb besides their own; others, slops and galligaskins; while the poorer sort were robed in rusty gowns of tuftmockado or taffeta, once guarded with velvet or lined with skins, but now tattered and threadbare. Their caps and bonnets were as varied as their apparel—some being high-crowned, some trencher-shaped, and some few wide in the leaf and looped at the side. Moreover, there was every variety of villanous aspect: the savage scowl of the desperado, the cunning leer of the trickster, and the sordid look of the mean knave. Several of them betrayed, by the marks of infamy branded on their faces, or by the loss of ears, that they had passed through the hands of the public executioner.

Amongst those there was one with a visage more frightfully mutilated than those of his comrades; the nose having been slit, and subsequently sewed together again, but so clumsily that the severed parts had only imperfectly united, communicating a strange, distorted, and forbidding look to the physiognomy. Clement Lanyere, the owner of this gashed and ghastly face, who was also reft of his ears, and branded on the cheek, had suffered infamy and degradation, owing to the licence he had given his tongue in respect to the Star-Chamber. Prosecuted in that court by Sir Giles Mompesson, as a notorious libeller and scandaller of the judges and first personages of the realm, he was found guilty, and sentenced accordingly. The court showed little leniency to such offenders; but it was a matter of grace

that his clamorous tongue was not torn out likewise, in addition to the punishment actually inflicted. A heavy fine and imprisonment accompanied the corporal penalties. Thus utterly ruined and degraded, and a mark for the finger of scorn to point at, Clement Lanyere, whose prospects had once been fair enough, as his features had been prepossessing, became soured and malevolent, embittered against the world, and at war with society. He turned promoter, or, in modern parlance, informer; lodging complaints, seeking out causes for prosecutions, and bringing people into trouble in order to obtain part of the forfeits they incurred for his pains. Strange to say, he attached himself to Sir Giles Mompesson,—the cause of all his misfortunes,—and became one of the most active and useful of his followers. It was thought no good could come of this alliance, and that the promoter only bided his time to turn upon his master, against whom it was only natural he should nourish secret vengeance. But, if it were so, Sir Giles seemed to entertain no apprehensions of him, probably thinking he could crush him whenever he pleased. Either way the event was long deferred. Clement Lanyere, to all appearance, continued to serve his master zealously and well; and Sir Giles gave no sign whatever of distrust, but, on the contrary, treated him with increased confidence. The promoter was attired wholly in black—cloak, cap, doublet, and hose were of sable. And as, owing to the emoluments springing from his vile calling, his means were far greater than those of his comrades, so his habiliments were better. When wrapped in his mantle, with his mutilated countenance covered with a mask which he generally wore, the informer might have passed for a cavalier; so tall and well formed was his figure, and so bold his deportment. The dangerous service he was employed upon, which exposed him to insult and injury, required him to be well armed; and he took care to be so.

Two or three of Sir Giles's myrmidons, having been selected for particular description, the designations of some others must suffice—such as Staring Hugh, a rascal of unmatched effrontery; the Gib Cat and Cutting Dick, dissolute rogues from the Pickt-hatch in Turnbull-street, near Clerkenwell; old Tom Wootton, once a notorious harbourer of "masterless men," at his house at Smart's Quay, but now a sheriff's officer; and, perhaps, it ought to be mentioned, that there were some half dozen swash-bucklers and sharpers from Alsatia, under the command of Captain Bludder, who was held responsible for their good conduct.

Such was Sir Giles's body-guard.

On his entrance, it may be remarked, the curtain in front of the raised table was more closely drawn, so as completely to conceal the guests. But their importance might be inferred from the serving-men, in rich liveries, standing before the traverse.

Profound silence reigned throughout the assemblage.

Having uncovered, as before mentioned, and made a formal reverence to the company, Sir Giles spoke as follows:—

"I crave your pardon, worthy sirs," he said, in a distinct and resolute voice, "for this intrusion, and regret to be the means of marring your festivity. I came hither wholly unprepared to find such an assemblage. Yet, though I would willingly have chosen a more fitting opportunity for my visit, and would postpone, if I could, to another occasion, the unpleasant duty I have to fulfil, the matter is urgent, and will not admit of delay. You will hold me excused, therefore, if I proceed with it, regardless of your presence; and I am well assured no let or interruption will be offered me, seeing I act with the royal licence and authority, of which I am the unworthy representative."

"Truly, your conduct requires explanation," Jocelyn Mounchensey cried, in a mocking tone. "If I had not been here in London, I should have judged, from your appearance, and that of your attendants, that a band of desperate marauders had broken in upon us, and that we must draw our swords to defend our lives, and save the house from pillage. But after what you have said, I conclude you to be the sheriff, come with your followers to execute some writ of attachment; and therefore, however annoying the presence of such a functionary may be,—however ill-timed may be your visit, and unmannerly your deportment,—we are bound not to molest you."

Provocation like this was rarely addressed to Sir Giles; and the choler occasioned by it was increased by the laughter and cheers of the company. Nevertheless he constrained his anger, replying in a stern, scornful tone—

"I would counsel you not to molest me, young man. The mistake you have committed in regard to myself may be pardoned in one of your evident inexperience; who, fresh from the boorish society of the country, finds himself, for the first time, amongst well-bred gentlemen. Of all here present you are probably the sole person ignorant that I am Sir Giles Mompesson. But it is scarcely likely that they should be aware, as I chance to be, that the clownish insolent who has dared to wag his tongue against me, is the son of a Star-Chamber delinquent."

CHAPTER IX.

THE LETTERS-PATENT.

A SLIGHT reaction in Sir Giles's favour was produced by his speech, but Jocelyn quite regained his position with the company when he exclaimed—

"My father was misjudged. His prosecutor was a villain, and his sentence iniquitous."

"You have uttered your own condemnation, Jocelyn Mounchensey," Sir Giles cried, with a savage laugh. "Know, to your confusion, that the High Court of Star-Chamber is so tender of upholding the honour of its sentences, that it ever punishes such as speak against them with the greatest severity. You have uttered your scandals openly."

"Imprudent young man, you have, indeed, placed yourself in fearful jeopardy," a gentleman near him observed to Jocelyn. "Escape, if you can. You are lost, if you remain here."

But instead of following the friendly advice, Jocelyn would have assaulted Sir Giles, if he had not been forcibly withheld by the gentleman.

The knight was not slow to follow up the advantage he had gained.

"Stand forward, Clement Lanyere," he exclaimed, authoritatively.

The promoter instantly advanced.

"Look at this man," Sir Giles continued, addressing Jocelyn; "and you will perceive how those who malign the Star-Chamber are treated. This disfigured countenance was once as free from seam or scar as your own; and yet, for an offence lighter than yours, it hath been stamped, as you see, with indelible infamy. Answer, Clement Lanyere,—and answer according to your conscience,—Was the sentence just of the high and honourable court by which you were tried?"

"It was just," the promoter replied, a deep flush dyeing his ghastly visage.

"And lenient?"

"Most lenient. For it left my foul tongue the power of speech it now enjoys."

"By whom were you prosecuted in the Star-Chamber?"

"By him I now serve."

"That is, by myself. Do you bear me malice for what I did?"

"I have never said so. On the contrary, Sir Giles, I have always declared I owe you a deep debt."

"Which you strive to pay?"

"Which I *will* pay."

"You hear what this man says, Mounchensey?" Sir Giles cried. "You have been guilty of the same offence as he. Why should you not be similarly punished?"

"If I were so punished, I would stab my prosecutor to the heart," Jocelyn replied.

At this rejoinder, Lanyere, who had hitherto kept his eyes on the ground, suddenly raised them, with a look of singular expression at the speaker.

"Humph!" Sir Giles ejaculated. "I must proceed to extremities with him, I find. Keep strict watch upon him, Lanyere; and follow him if he goes forth. Trace him to his lair. Now to

business. Give me the Letters-Patent, Lupo," he added, turning to the scrivener, as Lanyere retired. "These Letters-Patent," continued Sir Giles, taking two parchment scrolls with large seals pendent from them from Lupo Vulp, and displaying them to the assemblage, "these Royal Letters," he repeated in his steady, stern tones, and glancing round with a look of half defiance, "passed under the Great Seal, and bearing the King's sign-manual, as ye see, gentlemen, constitute the authority on which I act. They accord to me and my co-patentee, Sir Francis Mitchell, absolute and uncontrolled power and discretion in granting and refusing licences to all tavern-keepers and hostel-keepers throughout London. They give us full power to enter and inspect all taverns and hostels, at any time that may seem fit to us; to prevent any unlawful games being used therein; and to see that good order and rule be maintained. They also render it compulsory upon all alehouse-keepers, tavern-keepers, and inn-keepers throughout London, to enter into their own recognizances with us against the non-observance of our rules and regulations for their governance and maintenance, and to find two sureties: and in case of the forfeiture of such recognizances by any act of the parties, coming within the scope of our authority, it is provided that one moiety of the sum forfeited be paid to the Crown, and the other moiety to us. Lend me your ears yet further, I pray ye, gentlemen. These Royal Letters empower us to inflict certain fines and penalties upon all such as offend against our authority, or resist our claims; and they enable us to apprehend and commit to prison such offenders without further warrant than the letters themselves contain. In brief, gentlemen," he continued in a peremptory tone, as if insisting upon attention, "you will observe, that the absolute control of all houses of entertainment, where exciseable liquors are vended, is delegated to us by his most gracious Majesty King James. To which end ample powers have been given us by his Majesty, who has armed us with the strong arm of the law. Will it please ye to inspect the letters, gentlemen?" holding them forth. "You will find that his Majesty hath thus written:—'*In cujus rei testimonium has Literas nostras fieri fecimus patentes. Teste Meipso, apud Westm.* 10 *die Maij, Anno Regni nostri,*' &c. Then follows the royal signature. None of ye, I presume, will question its authenticity?"

A deep silence succeeded, in the midst of which Jocelyn Mounchensey broke forth:—

"I, for one, question it," he cried. "I will never believe that a King, who, like our gracious Sovereign, has the welfare of his subjects at heart, would sanction the oppression and injustice which those warrants, if entrusted to unscrupulous hands, must inevitably accomplish. I therefore mistrust the genuineness of the signature. If not forged, it has been obtained by fraud or misrepresentation."

Some murmurs of applause followed this bold speech; but the

gentleman who had previously counselled the young man again interposed, and whispered these words in his ear:—

"Your rash vehemence will undo you, if you take not heed. Beyond question, Sir Giles hath the King's sanction for what he does, and to censure him as you have done is to censure the Crown, which is next to treason. Be ruled by me, my good young sir, and meddle no more in the matter."

Sir Giles, who had some difficulty in controlling his choler, now spoke:—

"You have cast an imputation upon me, Jocelyn Mounchensey," he cried, with concentrated fury, "which you shall be compelled to retract as publicly as you have made it. To insult an officer of the Crown, in the discharge of his duty, is to insult the Crown itself, as you will find. In the King's name, I command you to hold your peace, or, in the King's name, I will instantly arrest you; and I forbid any one to give you aid. I will not be troubled thus. Appointed by his Majesty to a certain office, I exercise it as much for the benefit of the Royal Exchequer, as for my own personal advantage. I have his Majesty's full approval of what I do, and I need nothing more. I am accountable to no man—save the King," addressing this menace as much to the rest of the company as to Jocelyn. "But I came not here to render explanation, but to act. What, ho! Madame Bonaventure! Where are ye, Madame? Oh! you are here!"

"*Bon jour,* sweet Sir Giles," the landlady said, making him a profound obeisance. "What is your pleasure with me, sir? And to what am I to attribute the honour of this visit?"

"Tut, Madame. You know well enough what brings me hither, and thus attended," he replied. "I come in pursuance of a notice, served upon you a month ago. You will not deny having received it, since the officer who placed it in your hands is here present." And he indicated Clement Lanyere.

"*Au contraire,* Sir Giles," Madame Bonaventure replied. "I readily admit the receipt of a written message from you, which, though scarcely intelligible to my poor comprehension, did not seem as agreeably worded as a *billet-doux. Mais, ma foi!* I attached little importance to it. I did not suppose it possible—nor do I suppose it possible now"—with a captivating smile, which was totally lost upon Sir Giles—"that you could adopt such rigorous measures against me."

"My measures may appear rigorous, Madame," Sir Giles coldly replied; "but I am warranted in taking them. Nay, I am compelled to take them. Not having made the satisfaction required by the notice, you have deprived yourself of the protection I was willing to afford you. I am now merely your judge. The penalties incurred by your neglect are these:—Your licence was suspended a month ago; the notice expressly stating that it would be withdrawn, unless certain conditions were fulfilled.

Consequently, as ever since that time you have been vending exciseable liquors without lawful permission, you have incurred a fine of one hundred marks a-day, making a total of three thousand marks now due and owing from you, partly to his Majesty, and partly to his Majesty's representatives. This sum I now demand."

"*Ah! Dieu!*—three thousand marks!" Madame Bonaventure screamed. "What robbery is this?—what barbarity! 'Tis ruin —utter ruin! I may as well close my house altogether, and return to my own fair country. As I am an honest woman, Sir Giles, I cannot pay it. So it is quite useless on your part to make any such demand."

"You profess inability to pay, Madame," Sir Giles rejoined. "I cannot believe you, having some knowledge of your means. Nevertheless, I will acquaint you with a rule of law applicable to the contingency you put. '*Quod non habet in ære, luet in corpore,*' is a decree of the Star-Chamber; meaning, for I do not expect you to understand Latin, that he who cannot pay in purse shall pay in person. Aware of the alternative, you will make your choice. And you may thank me that I have not adjudged you at once—as I have the power—to three months within the Wood-street Compter."

"Ah, Sir Giles! what an atrocious idea! You are worse than a savage to talk of such a loathsome prison to me. *Ah! mon Dieu!* what is to happen to me!—would I were back again in my lovely Bordeaux!"

"You will have an opportunity of revisiting that fine city, Madame; for you will no longer be able to carry on your calling here."

"*Ciel!* Sir Giles! what mean you?"

"I mean, Madame, that you are disabled from keeping any tavern for the space of three years."

Madame Bonaventure clasped her hands together, and screamed aloud.

"In pity, Sir Giles!—In pity!" she cried.

The inexorable knight shook his head. The low murmurs of indignation among the company which had been gradually gathering force during the foregoing dialogue, now became clamorous. "A most scandalous proceeding!" exclaimed one. "Deprive us of our best French ordinary!" cried another. "Infamous extortioner!" shouted a third. "We'll not permit such injustice. Let us take the law into our own hands, and settle the question!" shouted a fourth. "Ay, down with the knight!" added a fifth.

But Sir Giles continued perfectly unmoved by the tempest raging around, and laughed to scorn these menaces, contenting himself with signing to Captain Bludder to be in readiness.

"A truce to this, gentlemen," he at length thundered forth; The King's warrant must be respected."

Again Madame Bonaventure besought his pity, but in vain. She took hold of his arm, and feigned to kneel to him, but he shook her coldly off.

"You are a very charming woman, no doubt, Madame," he said, sarcastically; "and some men might find you irresistible; but I am not made of such yielding stuff, and you may spare yourself further trouble, for all your powers of persuasion will fail with me. I renew my demand—and for the last time. Do not compel me to resort to extremities with you. It would grieve me," he added, with a bitter smile, "to drag so pretty a woman through the public streets, like a common debtor, to the Compter."

"*Grace! grace!* Sir Giles," cried Madame Bonaventure. Then seeing him remain inflexible, she added, in an altered tone, "I will never submit with life to such an indignity—never!"

"We'll all protect you, Madame," cried the assemblage, with one voice—"Let him lay hands upon you, and he shall see."

Sir Giles glanced at his myrmidons. They stepped quickly towards him in a body. At the same time Jocelyn Mounchensey, whom no efforts of the friendly gentleman could now restrain, sprang forward, and, drawing his sword, was just in time to place himself before Madame Bonaventure, as she drew hastily back.

"Have no fear, Madame, you are safe with me," the young man said, glancing fiercely at the knight and his troop.

The greatest confusion now reigned throughout the room. Other swords were drawn, and several of the guests mounted upon the benches to overlook the scene. Cyprien, and the rest of the drawers and tradesmen, ranged themselves behind their mistress, prepared to resist any attempt on the part of the myrmidons to seize her. The curtain at the head of the room was partly drawn aside, showing that the distinguished persons at the upper table were equally excited.

"Gentlemen," Sir Giles said, still maintaining perfect calmness in the midst of the tumult, "a word with you ere it be too late. I don't address myself to you, Jocelyn Mounchensey, for you are undeserving of any friendly consideration; but to all others I would counsel forbearance and nonresistance. Deliver up that woman to me."

"I will die upon the spot sooner than you shall be surrendered," said Jocelyn, encouraging the hostess, who clung to his disengaged arm.

"*Oh! merci! grand merci! mon beau gentilhomme!*" she exclaimed.

"Am I to understand, then, that you mean to impede me in the lawful execution of my purposes, gentlemen?" Sir Giles demanded.

"We mean to prevent an unlawful arrest," several voices rejoined.

"Be it so," the knight said; "I wash my hands of the con

sequences." Then, turning to his followers, he added—"Officers, at all hazards, attach the person of Dameris Bonaventure, and convey her to the Compter. At the same time, arrest the young man beside her—Jocelyn Mounchensey,—who has uttered treasonable language against our sovereign lord the King. I will tell you how to dispose of him anon. Do my bidding at once."

But ere the order could be obeyed, the authoritative voice which had previously been heard from the upper table exclaimed —"Hold!"

Sir Giles paused; looked irresolute for a minute; and then checked his myrmidons with a wave of the hand.

"Who is it stays the law?" he said, with the glare of a tiger from whom a bone has been snatched.

"One you must needs obey, Sir Giles," replied Lord Roos, coming towards him from the upper table. "You have unconsciously played a part in a comedy—and played it very well, too—but it is time to bring the piece to an end. We are fast verging on the confines of tragedy."

"I do not understand you, my lord," Sir Giles returned, gravely. "I discern nothing comic in the matter; though much of serious import."

"You do not perceive the comedy, because it has been part of our scheme to keep you in the dark, Sir Giles."

"So there is a scheme, then, afoot here, my lord?—ha!"

"A little merry plot, nothing more, Sir Giles—in the working of which your worthy co-patentee, Sir Francis Mitchell, has materially assisted."

"Ha!" exclaimed Sir Giles, glancing at his partner, who still occupied his elevated position upon the table—"I presume, then, I have to thank you, my lord, for the indignity offered to my friend?"

"As you please, Sir Giles," Lord Roos returned, carelessly. "You call it an indignity; but, in my opinion, the best thing to be done with a man whose head so swims with wine that his legs refuse to support him, is to tie him in a chair. He may else sacrifice his dignity by rolling under the table. But let this pass for the nonce. Before Sir Francis was wholly overcome, he was good enough to give me his signature. You saw him do it, gentlemen?" he added, appealing to the company.

"Yes—yes!—we saw him write it!" was the general reply.

"And to what end was this done, my lord?" Sir Giles demanded, sternly.

"To enable me," replied the imperturbable young nobleman, "to draw out a receipt in full of your joint claims against Madame Bonaventure. I have done it, Sir Giles, and here it is. And I have taken care to grant a renewal of her licence from the date of your notice; so that no penalties or fines can attach to her for

neglect. Take it, Madame Bonaventure," he continued, handing her the paper. "It is your full acquittance."

"And think you, my lord, that this shallow artifice—to give it no harsher term—will avail you anything?" Sir Giles cried, scornfully. "I set it aside at once."

"Your pardon, Sir Giles; you will do no such thing."

"And who will hinder me?—You, my lord?"

"Even I, Sir Giles. Proceed at your peril."

The young nobleman's assurance staggered his opponent.

"He must have some one to uphold him, or he would not be thus confident," he thought. "Whose was the voice I heard? It sounded like——No matter! 'Tis needful to be cautious."

"You do not, then, hold yourself bound by the acts of your partner, Sir Giles?" Lord Roos said.

"I deny this to be his act," the knight replied.

"Better question him at once on the subject," Lord Roos said. "Set him free, Cyprien."

The Gascon did as he was bidden, and with the aid of his fellow drawers, helped Sir Francis from the table. To the surprise of the company, the knight then managed to stagger forward unassisted, and would have embraced Sir Giles, if the latter had not thrust him off in disgust, with some violence.

"What folly is this, Sir Francis?" Sir Giles cried, angrily. "You have forgotten yourself strangely. You have taken leave of your senses, methinks!"

"Not a whit of it, Sir Giles—not a whit. I never was more my own master than I am at present, as I will prove to you."

"Prove it, then, by explaining how you came to sign that paper. You could not mean to run counter to me?"

"But I did," Sir Francis rejoined, highly offended. "I meant to run counter to you in signing it, and I mean it now."

"'Sdeath! you besotted fool, you are playing into their hands!"

"Besotted fool in your teeth, Sir Giles. I am as sober as yourself. My hand has been put to that paper, and what it contains I stand by."

"You design, then, to acquit Madame Bonaventure? Consider what you say."

"No need for consideration; I have always designed it."

"Ten thousand thanks, Sir Francis!" the hostess cried. "I knew I had an excellent friend in you."

The enamoured knight seized the hand she extended towards him, but in the attempt to kiss it, fell to the ground, amid the laughter of the company.

"Are you satisfied now, Sir Giles?" asked Lord Roos.

"I am satisfied that Sir Francis has been duped," he replied, "and that when his brain is free from the fumes of wine, he will bitterly regret his folly. But even his discharge will be insuf-

ficient. Though it may bind me, it will not bind the Crown, which will yet enforce its claims."

"That, Sir Giles, I leave to competent authority to decide," Lord Roos replied, retiring.

And as he withdrew, the curtains before the upper table were entirely withdrawn, disclosing the whole of the brilliant assemblage, and at the head of them one person far more brilliant and distinguished than the rest.

"Buckingham!" Sir Giles exclaimed. "I thought I knew the voice."

It was, indeed, the King's omnipotent favourite. Magnificently attired, the Marquis of Buckingham as far outshone his companions in splendour of habiliments as he did in stateliness of carriage and beauty of person. Rising from the table, and donning his plumed hat, looped with diamonds, with a gesture worthy of a monarch, while all the rest remained uncovered, as if in recognition of his superior dignity, he descended to where Sir Giles Mompesson was standing. It need scarcely be said that Jocelyn Mounchensey had never seen the superb favourite before; but he did not require to be told whom he beheld, so perfectly did Buckingham realize the descriptions given of him. A little above the ordinary height, with a figure of the most perfect symmetry, and features as aristocratic and haughty as handsome, it was impossible to conceive a prouder or a nobler-looking personage than the marquis. His costume was splendid, consisting of a doublet of white cut velvet, roped with pearls, which fitted him to admiration. Over his shoulders he wore a mantle of watchet-coloured velvet; his neck was encircled by a falling band; and silken hose of the same colour as the doublet completed his costume. His deportment was singularly dignified; but his manner might have conciliated more if it had been less imperious and disdainful.

Sir Giles made a profound obeisance as Buckingham advanced towards him. His salutation was haughtily returned.

"I have heard something of your mode of proceeding with the keepers of taverns and hostels, Sir Giles," the proud marquis said; "but this is the first occasion on which I have seen it put in practice,—and I am free to confess that you deal not over gently with them, if the present may be considered a specimen of your ordinary conduct. Those letters-patent were not confided to you by his Majesty to distress his subjects for your own particular advantage and profit, but to benefit the community by keeping such places of entertainment in better order than heretofore. I fear you have somewhat abused your warrant, Sir Giles."

"If to devote myself, heart and soul, to his Majesty's service, and to enrich his Majesty's exchequer, be to abuse my warrant, I have done so, my lord Marquis,—but not otherwise. I have

ever vindicated the dignity and authority of the Crown. You have just heard that, though my own just claims have been defeated by the inadvertence of my co-patentee, I have advanced those of the King."

"The King relinquishes all claims in the present case," Buckingham replied. "His gracious Majesty gave me full discretion in the matter, and I act as I know he himself would have acted."

And waving his hand to signify that he would listen to no remonstrances, the Marquis turned to Madame Bonaventure, who instantly prostrated herself before him, as she would have done before royalty itself, warmly thanking him for his protection.

"You must thank my Lord Roos, and not me, Madame," Buckingham graciously replied, raising her as he spoke. "It was at his lordship's instance I came here. He takes a warm interest in you, Madame."

"I shall ever be beholden to his lordship, I am sure," Madame Bonaventure said, casting down her eyes and blushing, or feigning to blush, "as well as to you, Monseigneur."

"My Lord Roos avouched," pursued Buckingham, "that at the Three Cranes I should find the prettiest hostess and the best of wine in London; and on my faith as a gentleman! I must say he was wrong in neither particular. Brighter eyes I have never beheld—rarer claret I have never drunk."

"Oh, Monseigneur! you quite overwhelm me. My poor house can scarcely hope to be honoured a second time with such a presence; but should it so chance——"

"You will give me as good welcome as you have done to-day. No lack of inducement to repeat the visit. Sir Giles Mompesson!"

"My lord Marquis."

"I lay my commands upon you, good Sir Giles, that no further molestation be offered to Madame Bonaventure, but that you give a good report of her house. Withdraw your followers without delay."

"Your commands shall be obeyed, my lord Marquis," Sir Giles rejoined; "but before I go, I have an arrest to make. That young man," pointing to Jocelyn, "has been talking treason."

"It is false, my lord Marquis," Jocelyn replied. "His Majesty hath not a more loyal subject than myself. I would cut out my tongue rather than speak against him. I have said the King is ill served in such officers as Giles Mompesson and Sir Francis Mitchell, and I abide by my words. They can reflect no dishonour on his Majesty."

"Save that they seem to imply a belief on your part that his Majesty has chosen his officers badly," Buckingham said, regarding the young man fixedly.

"Not so, my lord Marquis. These men have been favourably represented to his Majesty, who no doubt has been kept in ignorance of their iniquitous proceedings."

"What are you driving at, sir?" Buckingham cried, almost fiercely.

"I mean, my lord Marquis, that these persons may be the creatures of some powerful noble, whose interest it is to throw a cloak over their malpractices."

"'Fore heaven! some covert insult would seem to be intended," exclaimed Buckingham. "Who is this young man, Sir Giles?"

"He is named Jocelyn Mounchensey, my lord Marquis; and is the son of an old Norfolk knight baronet, who, you may remember, was arraigned before the Court of Star-Chamber, heavily fined, and imprisoned."

"I do remember the case, and the share you and Sir Francis had in it, Sir Giles," Buckingham rejoined.

"I am right glad to hear that, my lord," said Jocelyn. "You will not then wonder that I avow myself their mortal enemy."

"We laugh to scorn these idle vapourings," said Sir Giles; "and were it permitted," he added, touching his sword, "I myself would find an easy way to silence them. But the froward youth, whose brains seem crazed with his fancied wrongs, is not content with railing against us, but must needs lift up his voice against all constituted authority. He hath spoken contemptuously of the Star-Chamber,—and that, my lord Marquis, as you well know, is an offence which cannot be passed over."

"I am sorry for it," Buckingham rejoined; "but if he w l retract what he has said, and express compunction, with promise of amendment in future, I will exert my influence to have him held harmless."

"I will never retract what I have said against that iniquitous tribunal," Jocelyn rejoined, firmly. "I will rather die a martyr, as my father did, in the cause of truth."

"Your kindness is altogether thrown away upon him, my lord," Sir Giles said, with secret satisfaction.

"So I perceive," Buckingham rejoined. "Our business is over," he added, to the nobles and gallants around him; "so we may to our barges. You, my lord," he added to Lord Roos, "will doubtless tarry to receive the thanks of our pretty hostess."

And graciously saluting Madame Bonaventure, he quitted the tavern, accompanied by a large train, and entering his barge, amid the acclamations of the spectators, was rowed towards Whitehall.

CHAPTER X.

THE 'PRENTICES AND THEIR LEADER.

While the Marquis of Buckingham and his suite were moving towards the wharf, amid the acclamations of the crowd (for in the early part of his brilliant career the haughty favourite was extremely popular with the multitude, probably owing to the princely largesses he was in the habit of distributing among them), a very different reception awaited those who succeeded him. The hurrahs and other vociferations of delight and enthusiasm were changed into groans, hootings, and discordant yells, when Sir Francis Mitchell came in sight, supported between two stout myrmidons, and scarcely able to maintain his perpendicular as he was borne by them towards the wherry in waiting for him near the stairs. Though the knight was escorted by Captain Bludder and his Alsatian bullies, several of the crowd did not seem disposed to confine themselves to jeers and derisive shouts, but menaced him with some rough usage. Planting themselves in his path, they shook their fists in his face, with other gestures of defiance and indignity, and could only be removed by force. Captain Bludder and his roaring blades assumed their fiercest looks, swore their loudest oaths, twisted their shaggy moustaches, and tapped their rapier-hilts; but they prudently forbore to draw their weapons, well knowing that the proceeding would be a signal for a brawl, and that the cry of "Clubs!" would be instantly raised.

Amongst the foremost of those who thus obstructed Sir Francis and his party, was a young man with a lithe active figure, bright black eyes, full of liveliness and malice, and olive complexion, and a gipsy-like cast of countenance. Attired in a tight-fitting brown frieze jerkin with stone buttons, and purple hose, his head was covered with a montero cap, with a cock's feather stuck in it. He was armed neither with sword nor dagger, but carried a large cudgel or club, the well-known and formidable weapon of the London 'prentices, in the use of which, whether as a quarterstaff or missile, they were remarkably expert. Even a skilful swordsman stood but poor chance with them. Besides this saucy-looking personage, who was addressed as Dick Taverner by his comrades, there were many others, who, to judge from their habiliments and their cudgels, belonged to the same fraternity as himself; that is to say, they were apprentices to grocers, drapers, haberdashers, skinners, ironmongers, vintners, or other respectable artificers or tradesfolk.

Now Dick Taverner had an especial grudge against our two extortioners, for though he himself, being 'prentice to a book-

seller in Paul's Churchyard, had little concern with them, he was the son of an inn-keeper—Simon Taverner, of the Emperor's Head, Garlick Hill—who had been recently ruined by their exactions, his licence taken from him, and his house closed: enough to provoke a less mettlesome spark than Dick, who had vowed to revenge the parental injuries on the first opportunity. The occasion now seemed to present itself, and it was not to be lost. Chancing to be playing at bowls in the alley behind the Three Cranes with some of his comrades on the day in question, Dick learnt from Cyprien what was going forward, and the party resolved to have their share in the sport. If needful, they promised the drawer to rescue his mistress from the clutches of her antagonists, and to drive them from the premises. But their services in this respect were not required. They next decided on giving Sir Francis Mitchell a sound ducking in the Thames.

Their measures were quickly and warily taken. Issuing from an arched doorway at the side of the tavern, they stationed some of their number near it, while the main party posted themselves at the principal entrance in front. Scouts were planted inside to communicate with Cyprien, and messengers were despatched to cry "Clubs!" and summon the neighbouring 'prentices from Queenhithe, Thames Street, Trinity Lane, Old Fish Street, and Dowgate Hill; so that fresh auxiliaries were constantly arriving. Buckingham, with the young nobles and gallants, were, of course, allowed to pass free, and were loudly cheered; but the 'prentices soon ascertained from their scouts that Sir Francis was coming forth, and made ready for him.

Utterly unconscious of his danger, the inebriate knight replied to the gibes, scoffs, and menaces addressed to him, by snapping his fingers in his opponents' faces, and irritating them in their turn; but if he was insensible of the risk he ran, those around him were not, and his two supporters endeavoured to hurry him forward. Violently resisting their efforts, he tried to shake them off, and more than once stood stock-still, until compelled to go on. Arrived at the stair-head, he next refused to embark, and a scene of violent altercation ensued between him and his attendants. Many boats were moored off the shore, with a couple of barges close at hand; and the watermen and oarsmen, standing up in their craft, listened to what was going forward with much apparent amusement.

Hastily descending the steps, Captain Bludder placed himself near the wherry intended for the knight, and called to the others to make short work of it and bring him down. At this juncture the word was given by Dick Taverner, who acted as leader, and in less than two minutes, Sir Francis was transferred from the hands of his myrmidons to those of the 'prentices. To accomplish this, a vigorous application of cudgels was required, and some broken pates were the consequence of resistance; but the attack

was perfectly successful; the myrmidons and Alsatians were routed, and the 'prentices remained masters of the field, and captors of a prisoner. Stupified with rage and astonishment, Captain Bludder looked on; at one moment thinking of drawing his sword, and joining the fray; but the next, perceiving that his men were evidently worsted, he decided upon making off; and with this view he was about to jump into the wherry, when his purpose was prevented by Dick Taverner and a few others of the most active of his companions, who dashed down the steps to where he stood. The captain had already got one foot in the wherry, and the watermen, equally alarmed with himself, were trying to push off, when the invaders came up, and, springing into the boat, took possession of the oars, sending Bludder floundering into the Thames, where he sank up to the shoulders, and stuck fast in the mud, roaring piteously for help.

Scarcely were the 'prentices seated, than Sir Francis Mitchell was brought down to them, and the poor knight, beginning to comprehend the jeopardy in which he was placed, roared for help as lustily as the half-drowned Alsatian captain, and quite as ineffectually. The latter was left to shift for himself, but the former was rowed out some twenty or thirty yards from the shore, where, a stout cord being fastened to his girdle, he was plunged head-foremost into the river; and after being thrice drawn up, and as often submerged again, he was dragged on board, and left to shiver and shake in his dripping habiliments in the stern of the boat. The bath had completely sobered him, and he bitterly bemoaned himself, declaring that if he did not catch his death of cold he should be plagued with cramps and rheumatism during the rest of his days. He did not dare to utter any threats against his persecutors, but he internally vowed to be revenged upon them—cost what it might. The 'prentices laughed at his complaints, and Dick Taverner told him—"that as he liked not cold water, he should have spared them their ale and wine; but, as he had meddled with their liquors, and with those who sold them, they had given him a taste of a different beverage, which they should provide, free of cost, for all those who interfered with their enjoyments and the rights of the public." Dick added, "that his last sousing was in requital for the stoppage of the Emperor's Head, and that, with his own free will, he would have left him under the water with a stone round his neck."

This measure of retributive justice accomplished, the 'prentices and their leader made for the stairs, where they landed, after telling the watermen to row their fare to the point nearest his lodgings; an order which was seconded by Sir Francis himself, who was apprehensive of further outrage. Neither would he tarry to take in Captain Bludder, though earnestly implored to do so by that personage, who, having in his struggles sunk

deeper into the oozy bed, could now only just keep his bearded chin and mouth above the level of the tide. Taking compassion upon him, Dick Taverner threw him an oar, and, instantly grasping it, the Alsatian was in this way dragged ashore; presenting a very woful spectacle, his nether limbs being covered with slime, while the moisture poured from his garments, as it would from the coat of a water-spaniel. His hat had floated down the stream, and he had left one boot sticking in the mud, while his buff jerkin, saturated with wet, clung to his skin like a damp glove.

Leaving him to wring his cloak and dry his habiliments in the best way he could, the leader of the 'prentices collected together his forces, and, disposing them in something like military array, placed himself at their head, and marched towards the tavern, where they set up a great shout. Hitherto they had met with no interruption whatever. On the contrary, the watermen, bargemen, and others, had cheered them on in their work of mischief; and the crowd on shore appeared rather friendly to them than otherwise. Flushed with success, the riotous youths seemed well disposed to carry their work of retribution to extremities, and to inflict some punishment upon Sir Giles proportionate to his enormities. Having ascertained, from their scouts, that no one connected with the usurious knight had come forth, they felt quite secure of their prey, and were organizing a plan of attack, when intelligence was brought by a scout that a great disturbance was going on inside, in consequence of a young gentleman having been arrested by Sir Giles and his crew, and that their presence was instantly required by Madame Bonaventure.

On hearing this, Dick Taverner shouted—"To the rescue! to the rescue!" and rushed into the house, followed by the 'prentices, who loudly echoed his cries.

"*Par ici, messieurs! par ici!*—this way, this way!" vociferated Cyprien, who met them in the passage,—"the bowling-alley—there they are!"

But the Gascon's directions were scarcely needed. The clashing of swords would have served to guide the 'prentices to the scene of conflict.

CHAPTER XI.

JOHN WOLFE.

When Jocelyn Mounchensey called for his reckoning, Madame Bonaventure took him aside, showing by her looks that she had something important to communicate to him, and began by telling him he was heartily welcome to all he had partaken of at her ordinary, adding, that she considered herself very greatly his debtor for the gallantry and zeal he had displayed in her behalf.

"Not that I was in any real peril, my fair young sir," she continued, "though I feigned to be so; for I have powerful protectors, as you perceive; and indeed this was all a preconcerted scheme between my Lord Roos and his noble friends to turn the tables on the two extortioners. But that does not lessen my gratitude to you; and I shall try to prove it. You are in more danger than, perchance, you wot of; and I feel quite sure Sir Giles means to carry his threat into execution, and to cause your arrest."

Seeing him smile disdainfully, as if he had no apprehensions, she added, somewhat quickly—"What will your bravery avail against so many, *mon beau gentilhomme? Mon Dieu!*—nothing. No! no! I must get you assistance. Luckily, I have some friends at hand, the 'prentices—*grands et forts gaillards, avec des estocs;* Cyprien has told me they are here. Most certainly they will take your part. So, Sir Giles shall not carry you off, after all."

Jocelyn's lips again curled with the same disdainful smile as before.

"*Ah! vous êtes trop téméraire!*" Madame Bonaventure cried, tapping his arm. "Sit down here for awhile. I will give you the signal when you may depart with safety. Do not attempt to stir till then. You understand?"

Jocelyn did not understand very clearly; but, without making any observation to the contrary, he took the seat pointed out to him. The position was well chosen, inasmuch as it enabled him to command the movements of the foe, and offered him a retreat through a side-door, close at hand; though he was naturally quite ignorant whither the outlet might conduct him.

While this was passing, Sir Giles was engaged in giving directions respecting his partner, whose inebriate condition greatly scandalized him; and it was in pursuance of his orders that Sir Francis was transported to the wharf where the misadventure before related befel him. Never for a moment did Sir Giles's watchful eye quit Jocelyn, upon whom he was ready

to pounce like a tiger, if the young man made any movement to depart; and he only waited till the tavern should be clear of company to effect the seizure.

Meanwhile, another person approached the young man. This was the friendly stranger in the furred gown and flat cap, who had sat next him at dinner, and who, it appeared, was not willing to abandon him in his difficulties. Addressing him with much kindness, the worthy personage informed him that he was a bookseller, named John Wolfe, and carried on business at the sign of the Bible and Crown, in Paul's Churchyard, where he should be glad to see the young man whenever he was free to call upon him.

"But I cannot disguise from you, Master Jocelyn Mounchensey—for your dispute with Sir Francis Mitchell has acquainted me with your name," John Wolfe said—"that your rashness has placed you in imminent peril; so that there is but little chance for the present of my showing you the hospitality and kindness I desire. Sir Giles seems to hover over you as a rapacious vulture might do before making his swoop. Heaven shield you from his talons! And now, my good young sir, accept one piece of caution from me, which my years and kindly feelings towards you entitle me to make. An you 'scape this danger, as I trust you may, let it be a lesson to you to put a guard upon your tongue, and not suffer it to outrun your judgment. You are much too rash and impetuous, and by your folly (nay, do not quarrel with me, my young friend—I can give no milder appellation to your conduct) have placed yourself in the power of your enemies. Not only have you provoked Sir Francis Mitchell, whose malice is more easily aroused than appeased, but you have defied Sir Giles Mompesson, who is equally implacable in his enmities; and, as if two such enemies were not enough, you must needs make a third, yet more dangerous than either."

"How so, good Master Wolfe?" Jocelyn cried. "To whom do you refer?"

"To whom should I refer, Master Jocelyn," Wolfe rejoined, "but to my lord of Buckingham, whom you wantonly insulted? For the latter indiscretion there can be no excuse, whatever there may be for the former; and it was simple madness to affront a nobleman of his exalted rank, second only in authority to the King himself."

"But how have I offended the Marquis?" demanded Jocelyn, surprised.

"Is it possible you can have spoken at random, and without knowledge of the force of your own words?" John Wolfe rejoined, looking hard at him. "It may be so, for you are plainly ignorant of the world. Well, then," he added, lowering his tone, "when you said that these two abominable extor-

tioners were the creatures of some great man, who glozed over their villanous practices to the King, and gave a better account of them than they deserve, you were nearer the truth than you imagined; but it could hardly be agreeable to the Marquis to be told this to his face, since it is notorious to all (except to yourself) that he is the man."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Jocelyn, "I now see the error I have committed."

"A grave error, indeed," rejoined Wolfe, shaking his head, "and most difficult to be repaired—for the plea of ignorance, though it may suffice with me, will scarcely avail you with the Marquis. Indeed, it can never be urged, since he disowns any connexion with these men; and it is suspected that his half-brother, Sir Edward Villiers, goes between them in all their secret transactions. Of this, however, I know nothing personally, and only tell you what I have heard. But if it were not almost treasonable to say it, I might add, that his Majesty is far too careless of the means whereby his exchequer is enriched, and his favourites gratified; and, at all events, suffers himself to be too easily imposed upon. Hence all these patents and monopolies under which we groan. The favourites *must* have money; and as the King has little to give them, they raise as much as they please on the credit of his name. Thus everything is *sold;* places, posts, titles, all have their price—bribery and corruption reign everywhere. The lord-keeper pays a pension to the Marquis—so doth the attorney-general—and simony is openly practised; for the Bishop of Salisbury paid him 3500*l.* for his bishopric. But this is not the worst of it. Is it not terrible to think of a proud nobleman, clothed almost with supreme authority, being secretly leagued with sordid wretches, whose practices he openly discountenances and contemns, and receiving share of their spoil? Is it not yet more terrible to reflect that the royal coffers are in some degree supplied by similar means?"

"'Tis enough to drive an honest man distracted," Jocelyn said, "and you cannot wonder at my indignation, though you may blame my want of caution. I have said nothing half so strong as you have just uttered, Master Wolfe."

"Ah! but, my good young sir, I do not publicly proclaim my opinions, as you do. My lord of Buckingham's name must no more be called in question than his Majesty's. To associate the Marquis's name with those of his known instruments were to give him mortal offence. Even to hint at such a connexion is sufficient to provoke his displeasure! But enough of this. My purpose is not to lecture you, but to befriend you. Tell me frankly, my good young sir—and be not offended with the offer—will my purse be useful to you? If so, 'tis freely at your service; and it may help you in your present emergency—for

though there is not enough in it to bribe the master to forego his purpose against you, there is amply sufficient to procure your liberation, privily, from the men."

"I thank you heartily, good Master Wolfe, and believe me, I am not withheld by false pride from accepting your offer," Jocelyn replied; "but I must trust to my own arm to maintain my liberty, and to my own address to regain it, if I be taken. Again, I thank you, sir."

"I grieve that I cannot lend you other aid," John Wolfe replied, looking compassionately at him; "but my peaceful avocations do not permit me to take any part in personal conflicts, and I am loth to be mixed up in such disturbances. Nevertheless, I do not like to stand by and see outrage done."

"Concern yourself no more about me, worthy sir," interrupted Jocelyn. "Perhaps I shall not be molested, and if I should be, I am well able to take care of myself. Let those who assail me bear the consequences."

But John Wolfe still lingered. "If some of my apprentices were only here," he said, "and especially that riotous rogue, Dick Taverner, something might be done to help you effectually. —Ha! what is that uproar?" as a tumultuous noise, mixed with the cries of "Clubs!—Clubs!" was heard without, coming from the direction of the wharf. "As I live! the 'prentices *are* out, and engaged in some mischievous work, and it will be strange if Dick Taverner be not among them. I will see what they are about." And as he spoke he hurried to the oriel window which looked out upon the wharf, exclaiming—"Ay, ay,—'tis as I thought. Dick *is* among them, and at their head. 'Fore Heaven! they are attacking those ruffianly braggarts from Whitefriars, and are laying about them lustily with their cudgels. Ha! what is this I see? The Alsatians and the myrmidons are routed, and the brave lads have captured Sir Francis Mitchell. What are they about to do with him? I must go forth and see."

His purpose, however, was prevented by a sudden movement on the part of Sir Giles and his attendants. They came in the direction of Jocelyn Mounchensey, with the evident intention of seizing the young man. Jocelyn instantly sprang to his feet, drew his sword, and put himself in a posture of defence. The myrmidons prepared to beat down the young man's blade with their halberds, and secure him, when Jocelyn's cloak was plucked from behind, and he heard Madame Bonaventure's voice exclaim —"Come this way!—follow me instantly!"

Thus enjoined, he dashed through the door, which was instantly fastened, as soon as he had made good his retreat.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ARREST AND THE RESCUE.

Lupo Vulp had endeavoured to dissuade Sir Giles from putting his design of arresting Jocelyn into immediate execution; alleging the great risk he would incur, as well from the resolute character of the young man himself, who was certain to offer determined resistance, as from the temper of the company, which, being decidedly adverse to any such step, might occasion a disturbance that would probably result in the prisoner's rescue.

"In any case, Sir Giles," said the wily scrivener, "let me counsel you to tarry till the greater part of the guests be gone, and the assemblage outside dispersed; for I noted many turbulent 'prentices among the mob, who are sure to be troublesome."

"Since the young man shows no present disposition to quit the house," Sir Giles replied, looking askance at Jocelyn, who just then had moved to another part of the room with Madame Bonaventure, "there is no urgency; and it may be prudent to pause a few moments, as you suggest, good Lupo. But I will not suffer him to depart. I perceive, from her gestures and glances, that our tricksy hostess is plotting some scheme with him. Plot away, fair mistress; you must have more cunning than I give you credit for, if you outwit me a second time in the same day. I can guess what she proposes. You note that side door near them, Lupo? She is advising the youth's flight that way; and he, like a hair-brained fool, will not listen to the suggestion. But it will be well to watch the outlet. Hark ye, Lanyere," he added to the promoter, "take three men with you, and go round quickly to the passage with which yon door communicates. Station yourselves near the outlet; and if Mounchensey comes forth, arrest him instantly. You see the door I mean? About it, quick!"

And Lanyere instantly departed with three of the myrmidons.

"I would this arrest could be lawfully effected, Sir Giles," said Lupo Vulp, "by a serjeant-at-arms or pursuivant. There would then be no risk. Again I venture to counsel you to proceed regularly. No great delay would be occasioned, if your worship went to Westminster, and made a complaint against the young man before the Council. In that case a messenger of the Court would be despatched to attach his person; and even if he should quit the house in the meanwhile, Lanyere will keep on his track. That were the surest course. As to the manner of proceeding, I conclude it will be by *Ore tenus*. It is not likely that this youth's headstrong temper, coupled with his fantastic notions of honour, will permit him to deny your worship's accusation, and therefore his confession being written down and subscribed

by himself, will be exhibited against him when he is brought to the bar of the Star-Chamber, and he will be judged *ex ore suo.* Your worship will make quick work of it."

"*Cum confitente reo citius est agendum,*" replied Sir Giles. "No one knows better than thou, good Lupo, how promptly and effectually the court of Star-Chamber will vindicate its authority, and how severely it will punish those who derogate from its dignity. No part of the sentence shall be remitted with my consent. This insolent youth shall suffer to the same extent as Lanyere. Pilloried, branded, mutilated, degraded, he shall serve as a warning to my enemies."

"Your worship can scarce make him more of a scarecrow than you have made of Lanyere," Lupo remarked, with a grin. "But do you decide on applying in the first instance to the Council?"

"No," Sir Giles replied, "I will not lose sight of him. He shall not have a chance of escape. Marked you not, Lupo, how the rash fool committed himself with Buckingham? And think you the proud Marquis would hold me blameless, if, by accident, he should get off scot-free, after such an outrage? But see! the room is well-nigh cleared. Only a few loiterers remain. The time is come."

And he was about to order the attack, when the disturbance outside reached his ears, and checked him for a moment. Sir Giles was considering what could be the cause of the tumult, and hesitating whether to go forth and support Sir Francis, in case he stood in need of assistance, when the discomfited myrmidons rushed into the room. A few words sufficed to explain what had occurred, and indeed the bloody visages of some of the men showed how roughly they had been handled. Though greatly exasperated, Sir Giles was determined not to be balked of his prey; and fearing Jocelyn might escape in the confusion which an attack upon the 'prentices would occasion, he gave the word for his instant seizure, and rushed towards him, as before related. How he was baffled has already been told. His wrath knew no bounds when the young man disappeared. He hurled himself furiously against the door, but it resisted all his efforts to burst it open. Suddenly the bolt was withdrawn, and Clement Lanyere and his men stood before him.

"Have you secured him?" Sir Giles demanded, trying to descry the fugitive among them. "Death and fiends! you have not let him escape?"

"No one has passed us, except Madame Bonaventure," the promoter replied. "She was wholly unattended, and came in this direction. We were stationed within yon ante-chamber, which appears to be the sole means of communication with this passage, and we ought therefore to have intercepted the young man when he came forth."

"You were not wont to be thus short-sighted, Lanyere. There

must be some other mode of exit, which you have failed to discover," Sir Giles cried, furiously. "Ha! here it is!" he exclaimed, dashing aside a piece of tapestry that seemed merely hung against the wall, but in reality concealed a short flight of steps. "Purblind dolts that you are, not to find this out. You shall answer for your negligence hereafter, if we take him not."

And, accompanied by the troop, he hurried down the steps, which brought him to a lower room, communicating on one hand with a small court, and, on the other, with the kitchen and offices attached to the tavern. Directing Lanyere to search the latter, Sir Giles rushed into the court, and uttered a shout of savage joy on perceiving Jocelyn, sword in hand, scaling a wall which separated the court from the bowling-green.

Some difficulty, it appeared, had occurred to the hostess in forcing open a private door in the yard leading to the green, which being rarely used (for the principal entrance was situated elsewhere), its fastenings were rusty, and refused to act. This delay favoured the pursuers; and on hearing their approach, Jocelyn strove to effect his retreat in the manner described.

But Sir Giles was further served, though unintentionally, by Madame Bonaventure, who succeeded in drawing back the rusty bolt at the very moment he came up; and no impediment now existing, the knight thrust her rudely aside, and sprang through the doorway just as Jocelyn leaped from the wall.

Disregarding Sir Giles's summons to surrender, the young man hurried on till he reached the middle of the bowling-green, where, finding flight impossible, as there was no apparent outlet at the further end of the garden, while it was certain that the tipstaves would pluck him from the wall with their hooks if he attempted to clamber over it, he turned and stood upon his defence.

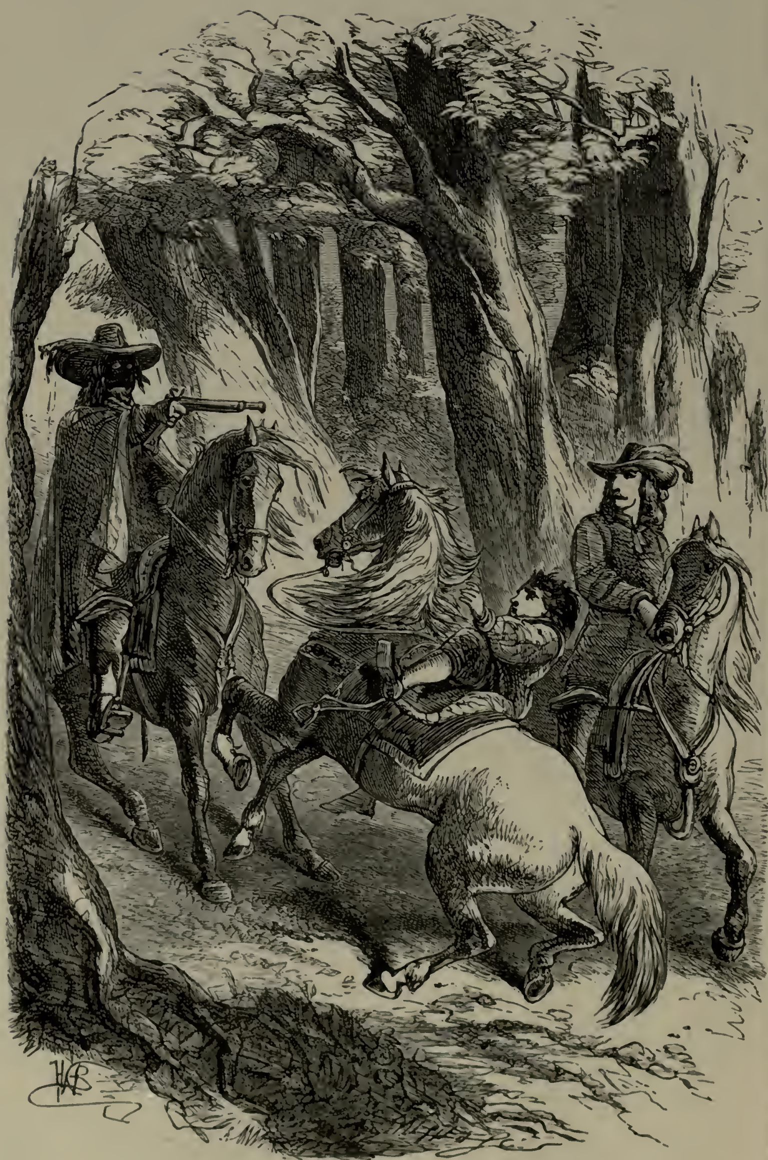
Willing to have the credit of disarming him unaided, and confident in his own superior strength and skill, Sir Giles signed to his myrmidons to stand back, while he alone advanced towards the young man. A turn in his strong wrist would, he imagined, suffice to accomplish his purpose. But he found out his error the moment he engaged with his opponent. In dexterity and force the latter was fully his match, while in nimbleness of body Jocelyn surpassed him. The deadly glances thrown at him by the young man showed that the animosity of the latter would only be satisfied with blood. Changing his purpose, therefore, Sir Giles, in place of attempting to cross his antagonist's sword, rapidly disengaged his point, and delivered a stoccata, or in modern terms of fence, a thrust in carte, over the arm, which was instantly parried. For some minutes the conflict continued without material success on either side. Holding his rapier short, with the point towards his adversary's face, Jocelyn retreated a few paces at first, but then, charging in turn, speedily won back his ground. Stoccatas, imbroccatas, drittas, mandrittas, and

riversas were exchanged between them in a manner that delighted the myrmidons, most of whom were amateurs of sword-play. Infuriated by the unexpected resistance he encountered, Sir Giles, at length, resolved to terminate the fight; and finding his antagonist constantly upon some sure ward, endeavoured to reach him with a half incartata; but instantly shifting his body with marvellous dexterity, Jocelyn struck down the other's blade, and replied with a straight thrust, which must infallibly have taken effect, if his rapier had not been beaten from his grasp by Clement Lanyere at the very moment it touched his adversary's breast. At the same time the young man's arms were grasped from behind by two of the myrmidons, and he lay at his enemy's disposal.

Sir Giles, however, sheathed his rapier, saying, with a grim smile, "that he did not mean to deprive himself of the satisfaction of seeing his foe stand in the pillory, and submit to the sworn torturer's knife;" adding, "it was somewhat strange that one who could guard his body so well should keep such indifferent watch over his tongue."

Jocelyn made no reply to the sarcasm, and the knight was preparing to depart with his followers, when a loud and tumultuous uproar proclaimed the approach of the apprentices. The posse of victorious youths made their way to the bowling-green by the principal entrance, situated, as before mentioned, at a different point from the door by which the others had gained it. More apprehensive of losing his prisoner, than concerned for his personal safety (for though the aggressive party greatly exceeded his own in numbers, he knew well how to deal with them, being accustomed to such encounters), Sir Giles gave some orders respecting Jocelyn to Clement Lanyere, and then prepared to resist the onslaught, by causing his band to form a solid square; those armed with bills and staves being placed in the foremost ranks. This disposition being quickly made, he drew his sword, and in a loud authoritative tone commanded the apprentices to stand back. Such was the effect produced by his voice, and the terrors of his countenance, which seldom failed to strike awe into beholders, that the intending rescuers came to a halt, and showed some hesitation in engaging him.

"What means this disturbance?" thundered Sir Giles: "and why do you offer to molest me in the execution of my duty? Know you not that assemblages like yours are unlawful, and that you are liable to severe punishment, unless you immediately disperse yourselves, and peaceably depart to your own habitations? About your business, I say, and trouble me no longer! But first I command you to deliver up your ringleaders, and especially those who, as I am told, have perpetrated the gross outrage and violence upon the person of Sir Francis Mitchell. An example shall be made of them."



THE MASKED HORSEMAN.

"You waste your breath, Sir Giles, and your big words will avail you nothing with us," Dick Taverner replied. "Now hear me in return. We, the bold and loyal 'prentices of London, who serve our masters and our masters' master, the King's highness, well and truly, will not allow an unlawful arrest to be made by you or by any other man. And we command you peaceably to deliver up your prisoner to us; or, by the rood! we will take him forcibly from your hands!"

"Out, insolent fellow!" cried Sir Giles; "thou wilt alter thy tune when thou art scourged at the cart's-tail."

"You must catch me first, Sir Giles," replied Dick; "and two words will go to that. We have read Sir Francis Mitchell a lesson he is not likely to forget; and we will read you one, an you provoke us. We have a few old scores to wipe off."

"Ay, marry! have we," cried an embroiderer's apprentice; "these extortioners have ruined my master's trade by their gold-and-silver-thread monopoly."

"Hundreds of worthy men have been thrown out of employment by their practices," said a vintner's 'prentice. "We sell not half the wine we used to do. And no wonder! seeing two-thirds of the inns in London are shut up."

"The brewers will be all ruined," said a burly 'prentice, with a wooden shovel over his shoulder; "since every day a fresh ale-house is closed, and no new licences are granted. Murrain seize all such monopolists! They are worse than the fly in hops, or smut in barley."

"Ay, plague take 'em!" exclaimed Dick Taverner. "They are as bad as the locusts of Egypt. When they have devoured the substance of one set of tradesfolk, they will commence upon that of another. No one is safe from them. It will be your turn next, Master Mercer. Yours after him, Master Ironmonger, however hard of digestion may be your wares. You will come third, Master Fishmonger You fourth, Master Grocer. And when they are surfeited with spiceries and fish, they will fall upon you, tooth and nail, Master Goldsmith."

"I trow not," cried the apprentice last appealed to. "Our masters are too rich and too powerful to submit to such usage."

"The very reason they will undergo it," replied Dick. "Their riches are only a temptation to plunder. I repeat, no man is safe from these extortioners. Since the law will not give us redress, and put them down, we must take the law into our own hands. They shall have Club Law."

"Ay, ay—'Prentices' law—Club law!" chorused the others.

"Sir Giles will make a Star-Chamber matter of it. He will have us up before the Council," laughed the goldsmith's 'prentice.

"He will buy a monopoly of cudgels, to deprive us of their use," cried a bowyer.

"We will bestow that patent upon him gratis," quoth Dick, making his staff whistle round his head.

"The prisoner!—gentlemen 'prentices—do not forget him!" cried Cyprien, who, with two other serving-men and the cook, had joined the assailing party. "Madame Bonaventure implores you to effect his rescue."

"And so we will, my jovial Gascon," replied Dick. "Come, Sir Giles! are we to have the young gentleman from you by force or free-will?"

"You shall have him in neither way, sirrah," the knight rejoined. "You yourself shall bear him company in the Fleet. Upon them, my men, and make for the door!"

And as the command was given, he and his troop made a sudden dash upon the 'prentices, who, unable to stand against the bills levelled against their breasts, gave way. Still, the gallant youths were by no means routed. Instantly closing upon their opponents, and being quite as nimble of foot as they, they contrived to cut off their retreat from the garden; and a sharp conflict took place between the parties as they came to close quarters near the entrance. Three of the myrmidons were felled by Dick Taverner's cudgel; and at last, watching his opportunity, with both hands he launched a bowl which he had picked up at Sir Giles's head. If the missile had taken effect, the fight would have been over; but the knight avoided the blow by stooping down, and the bowl, passing over him, hit Lupo Vulp full in the stomach, and brought him to the ground deprived of breath. Meanwhile, Sir Giles, springing quickly forward, pinned the apprentice against the wall with his rapier's point.

"I have thee at last, knave," he cried, seizing Dick by the collar, and delivering him to the custody of the myrmidons nearest him—"I told thee thou shouldst visit the Fleet. And so thou shalt."

Notwithstanding the capture of their leader, the 'prentices fought manfully, and it still appeared doubtful whether Sir Giles would be able to effect a retreat after all, embarrassed as he now was with two prisoners. Under these circumstances he made a sign to Clement Lanyere to withdraw with Jocelyn through the other door, ordering the two myrmidons who had charge of Dick Taverner to follow him with their captive.

It was no easy task to carry out the order; but the promoter managed to accomplish it. Single-handed he drove back all who opposed his progress, while the two prisoners were borne towards the door by the men having them in custody.

Hitherto Jocelyn had made no attempt at self-liberation; awaiting, probably, the result of the 'prentices' efforts in his behalf, or some more favourable opportunity than had hitherto presented itself. On reaching the little court, the time for exertion seemed to be come. Shaking off the myrmidons who

pinioned him, and seizing a bill from one of them, he instantly stretched the fellow at his feet, and drove off his comrade. This done, he lent immediate assistance to Dick Taverner, setting him free, and arming him with as much promptitude as he had used to effect his own deliverance.

While thus engaged, he received no interruption from Clement Lanyere, though, if he had chosen, the promoter might no doubt have effectually opposed him. But Lanyere either was, or feigned to be, engaged with some skirmishers at the door; and it was only when both the prisoners had got free, that he rushed towards them, loudly reprehending the men for their carelessness. But if they were to blame, he was no less so, for he showed little address in following the fugitives, and managed to take a wrong turn in the passage, which led both him and the myrmidons astray, so that the prisoners got clear off.

How Jocelyn and Dick Taverner contrived to reach the Vintry Wharf, neither of them very distinctly knew,—such was the hurried manner in which they passed through the tavern; but there they were, precisely at the moment that Sir Giles Mompesson, having fought his way through all opposition, issued from the porch at the head of his band.

Quite satisfied with his previous encounter with the redoubtable knight, and anxious to escape before his evasion should be discovered, Dick beckoned to his companion, and making all the haste they could to the stairs, they both jumped into the nearest wherry, when the apprentice ordered the two watermen within it to row for their lives to London-bridge.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW JOCELYN MOUNCHENSEY ENCOUNTERED A MASKED HORSEMAN ON STAMFORD HILL.

Two days after the events last recorded, a horseman, followed at a respectful distance by a mounted attendant, took his way up Stamford Hill. He was young, and of singularly prepossessing appearance, with a countenance full of fire and spirit, and blooming with health, and it was easy to see that his life had been passed in the country, and in constant manly exercise; for though he managed his horse—a powerful bay charger—to perfection, there was nothing of the town gallant, or of the soldier, about him. His doublet and cloak were of a plain dark material, and had seen service; but they well became his fine symmetrical figure, as did the buff boots defending his well-made, vigorous limbs. Better seat in saddle, or lighter hand with bridle, no man could possess than he; and his noble steed, which like him-

self was full of courage and ardour, responded to all his movements, and obeyed the slightest indication of his will. His arms were rapier and dagger; and his broad-leaved hat, ornamented with a black-feather, covered the luxuriant brown locks that fell in long ringlets over his shoulders. So *debonnair* was the young horseman in deportment, so graceful in figure, and so comely in looks, that he had excited no little admiration as he rode forth at an early hour that morning from Bishopsgate Street, and passing under the wide portal in the old city walls, speeded towards the then rural district of Shoreditch, leaving old Bedlam and its saddening associations on the right, and Finsbury Fields, with its gardens, dog-houses, and windmills, on the left. At the end of Bishopsgate-Street-Without a considerable crowd was collected round a party of comely young milkmaids, who were executing a lively and characteristic dance to the accompaniment of a bagpipe and fiddle. Instead of carrying pails as was their wont, these milkmaids, who were all very neatly attired, bore on their heads a pile of silver plate, borrowed for the occasion, arranged like a pyramid, and adorned with ribands and flowers. In this way they visited all their customers and danced before their doors. A pretty usage then observed in the environs of the metropolis in the month of May. The merry milkmaids set up a joyous shout as the youth rode by; and many a bright eye followed his gallant figure till it disappeared. At the Conduit beyond Shoreditch, a pack of young girls, who were drawing water, suspended their task to look after him; and so did every buxom country lass he encountered, whether seated in tilted cart, or on a pillion behind her sturdy sire. To each salutation addressed to him the young man cordially replied, in a voice blithe as his looks; and in some cases, where the greeting was given by an elderly personage, or a cap was respectfully doffed to him, he uncovered his own proud head, and displayed his handsome features yet more fully.

So much for the master: now for the man. In his own opinion, at least—for he was by no means deficient in self-conceit—the latter came in for an equal share of admiration; and certes, if impudence could help him to win it, he lacked not the recommendation. Staring most of the girls out of countenance, he leered at some of them so offensively, that their male companions shook their fists or whips at him, and sometimes launched a stone at his head. Equally free was he in the use of his tongue; and his jests were so scurrilous and so little relished by those to whom they were addressed, that it was, perhaps, well for him, in some instances, that the speed at which he rode soon carried him out of harm's reach. The knave was not ill-favoured; being young, supple of limb, olive-complexioned, black-eyed, saucy, roguish-looking, with a turned-up nose, and extremely white teeth. He wore no livery, and indeed his attire was rather that of a citizen's

apprentice than such as beseemed a gentleman's lacquey. He was well mounted on a stout sorrel horse; but though the animal was tractable enough, and easy in its paces, he experienced considerable difficulty in maintaining his seat on its back.

In this way, Jocelyn Mounchensey and Dick Taverner (for the reader will have no difficulty in recognising the pair) arrived at Stamford Hill; and the former, drawing in the rein, proceeded slowly up the gentle ascent.

It was one of those delicious spring mornings, when all nature seems to rejoice; when the newly-opened leaves are greenest and freshest; when the lark springs blithest from the verdant mead, and soars nearest heaven; when a thousand other feathered choristers warble forth their notes in copse and hedge; when the rooks caw mellowly near their nests in the lofty trees; when gentle showers, having fallen overnight, have kindly prepared the earth for the morrow's genial warmth and sunshine; when that sunshine, each moment, calls some new object into life and beauty; when all you look upon is pleasant to the eye, all you listen to is delightful to the ear;—in short, it was one of those exquisite mornings, only to be met with in the merry month of May, and only to be experienced in full perfection in Merry England.

Arrived at the summit of the hill, commanding such extensively charming views, Jocelyn halted and looked back with wonder at the vast and populous city he had just quitted, now spread out before him in all its splendour and beauty. In his eyes it seemed already overgrown, though it had not attained a tithe of its present proportions; but he could only judge according to his opportunity, and was unable to foresee its future magnitude. But if London has waxed in size, wealth, and population during the last two centuries and a-half, it has lost nearly all the peculiar features of beauty which distinguished it up to that time, and made it so attractive to Jocelyn's eyes. The diversified and picturesque architecture of its ancient habitations, as yet undisturbed by the innovations of the Italian and Dutch schools, and brought to full perfection in the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth, gave the whole city a characteristic and fanciful appearance. Old towers, old belfries, old crosses, slender spires innumerable, rose up amid a world of quaint gables and angular roofs. Story above story sprang those curious dwellings; irregular yet homogeneous; dear to the painter's and the poet's eye; elaborate in ornament; grotesque in design; well suited to the climate, and admirably adapted to the wants and comforts of the inhabitants; picturesque like the age itself, like its costume, its manners, its literature. All these characteristic beauties and peculiarities are now utterly gone. All the old picturesque habitations have been devoured by fire, and a New City has risen in their stead;—not to compare with the Old City, though—and conveying no

notion whatever of it—any more than you or I, worthy reader, in our formal, and, I grieve to say it, ill-contrived attire, resemble the picturesque-looking denizens of London, clad in doublet, mantle, and hose, in the time of James the First.

Another advantage in those days must not be forgotten. The canopy of smoke overhanging the vast Modern Babel, and oftentimes obscuring even the light of the sun itself, did not dim the beauties of the Ancient City,—sea coal being but little used in comparison with wood, of which there was then abundance, as at this time in the capital of France. Thus the atmosphere was clearer and lighter, and served as a finer medium to reveal objects which would now be lost at a quarter the distance.

Fair, sparkling, and clearly defined, then rose up Old London before Jocelyn's gaze. Girded round with grey walls, defended by battlements, and approached by lofty gates, four of which—to wit, Cripplegate, Moorgate, Bishopsgate, and Aldgate—were visible from where he stood; it riveted attention from its immense congregation of roofs, spires, pinnacles, and vanes, all glittering in the sunshine; while in the midst of all, and pre-eminent above all, towered one gigantic pile—the glorious Gothic cathedral. Far on the east, and beyond the city walls, though surrounded by its own mural defences, was seen the frowning Tower of London—part fortress and part prison—a structure never viewed in those days without terror, being the scene of so many passing tragedies. Looking westward, and rapidly surveying the gardens and pleasant suburban villages lying on the north of the Strand, the young man's gaze settled for a moment on Charing Cross—the elaborately carved memorial to his Queen, Eleanor, erected by Edward I.—and then ranging over the palace of Whitehall and its two gates, Westminster Abbey—more beautiful without its towers than with them—it became fixed upon Westminster Hall; for there in one of its chambers, the ceiling of which was adorned with gilded stars, were held the councils of that terrible tribunal which had robbed him of his inheritance, and now threatened him with deprivation of liberty, and mutilation of person. A shudder crossed him as he thought of the Star-Chamber, and he turned his gaze elsewhere, trying to bring the whole glorious city within his ken.

A splendid view, indeed! Well might King James himself exclaim, when standing, not many years previously, on the very spot where Jocelyn now stood, and looking upon London for the first time since his accession to the throne of England—well might he exclaim in rapturous accents, as he gazed on the magnificence of his capital—"At last the richest jewel in a monarch's crown is mine!"

After satiating himself with this, to him, novel and wonderful prospect, Jocelyn began to bestow his attention on objects closer at hand, and examined the landscapes on either side of the

eminence, which, without offering any features of extraordinary beauty, were generally pleasing, and exercised a soothing influence upon his mind. At that time Stamford Hill was crowned with a grove of trees, and its eastern declivity was overgrown with brushwood. The whole country, on the Essex side, was more or less marshy, until Epping Forest, some three miles off, was reached. Through a swampy vale on the left, the river Lea, so dear to the angler, took its slow and silent course; while through a green valley on the right, flowed the New River, then only just opened. Pointing out the latter channel to Jocelyn, Dick Taverner, who had now come up, informed him that he was present at the completion of that important undertaking. And a famous sight it was, the apprentice said. The Lord Mayor of London, the Aldermen, and the Recorder were all present in their robes and gowns to watch the flood-gate opened, which was to pour the stream that had run from Amwell Head into the great cistern near Islington. And this was done amidst deafening cheers and the thunder of ordnance.

"A proud day it was for Sir Hugh Myddleton," Dick added; "and some reward for his perseverance through difficulties and disappointments."

"It is to be hoped the good gentleman has obtained more substantial reward than that," Jocelyn replied. "He has conferred an inestimable boon upon his fellow-citizens, and is entitled to their gratitude for it."

"As to gratitude on the part of the citizens, I can't say much for that, sir. And it is not every man that meets with his deserts, or we know where our friends Sir Giles Mompesson and Sir Francis Mitchell would be. The good cits are content to drink the pure water of the New River, without bestowing a thought on him who has brought it to their doors. Meantime, the work has well-nigh beggared Sir Hugh Myddleton, and he is likely to obtain little recompence beyond what the consciousness of his own beneficent act will afford him."

"But will not the King requite him?" Jocelyn asked.

"The King *has* requited him with a title," Dick returned. "A title, however, which may be purchased at a less price than good Sir Hugh has paid for it, now-a-days. But it must be owned, to our sovereign's credit, that he did far more than the citizens of London would do; since when they refused to assist Master Myddleton (as he then was) in his most useful work, King James undertook, and bound himself by indenture under the great seal, to pay half the expenses. Without this, it would probably never have been accomplished."

"I trust it may be profitable to Sir Hugh in the end," Jocelyn said; "and if not, he will reap his reward hereafter."

"It is not unlikely we may encounter him, as he now dwells near Edmonton, and is frequently on the road," Dick said; "and

if so, I will point him out to you. I have some slight acquaintance with him, having often served him in my master's shop in Paul's Churchyard. Talking of Edmonton, with your permission, sir, we will break our fast at the Bell,* where I am known, and where you will be well served. The host is a jovial fellow and trusty, and may give us information which will be useful before we proceed on our perilous expedition to Theobalds."

"I care not how soon we arrive there," Jocelyn cried; "for the morning has so quickened my appetite, that the bare idea of thy host's good cheer makes all delay in attacking it unsupportable."

"I am entirely of your opinion, sir," Dick said, smacking his lips. "At the Bell at Edmonton, we are sure of fresh fish from the Lea, fresh eggs from the farmyard, and stout ale from the cellar; and if these three things do not constitute a good breakfast, I know not what others do. So let us be jogging onwards. We have barely two miles to ride. Five minutes to Tottenham; ten to Edmonton; 'tis done!"

It was not, however, accomplished quite so soon as Dick anticipated. Ere fifty yards were traversed, they were brought to a stop by an unlooked-for incident.

Suddenly emerging from a thick covert of wood, which had concealed him from view, a horseman planted himself directly in their path, ordering them in a loud, authoritative voice, to stand; and enforcing attention to the injunction by levelling a caliver at Jocelyn's head.

The appearance of this personage was as mysterious as formidable. The upper part of his features was concealed by a black mask. His habiliments were sable; and the colour of his powerful steed was sable likewise. Boots, cap, cloak, and feather were all of the same dusky hue. His frame was strongly built, and besides the caliver he was armed with sword and poniard. Altogether, he constituted an unpleasant obstacle in the way.

* Lest we should be charged with an anachronism, we may mention that the Bell at Edmonton, immortalized in the story of John Gilpin, was in good repute in the days we treat of, as will appear from the following extract from John Savile's Tractate, entitled, *King James's Entertainment at Theobald's, with his Welcome to London.* Having described the vast concourse of people that flocked forth to greet their new Sovereign on his approach to the metropolis, honest John says:—"After our breakfast at Edmonton at the sign of the Bell, we took occasion to note how many would come down in the next hour, so coming up into a chamber next to the street, where we might both best see, and likewise take notice of all passengers, we called for an hour-glass, and after we had disposed of ourselves who should take the number of the horse, and who the foot, we turned the hour-glass, which before it was half run out, we could not possibly truly number them, they came so exceedingly fast; but there we broke off, and made our account of 309 horses, and 137 footmen, which course continued that day from four o'clock in the morning till three o'clock in the afternoon, and the day before also, as the host of the house told us, without intermission." Besides establishing the existence of the renowned Bell at this period, the foregoing passage is curious in other respects.

Dick Taverner was not able to render much assistance on the occasion. The suddenness with which the masked horseman burst forth upon them scared his horse; and the animal becoming unmanageable, began to rear, and finally threw its rider to the ground—luckily without doing him much damage.

Meanwhile the horseman, lowering his caliver, thus addressed Jocelyn, who, taking him for a robber, was prepared to resist the attack.

"You are mistaken in me, Master Jocelyn Mounchensey," he said; "I have no design upon your purse. I call upon you to surrender yourself my prisoner."

"Never, with life," the young man replied. "In spite of your disguise, I recogniseyou as one of Sir Giles Mompesson's myrmidons; and you may conclude from our former encounter whether my resistance will be determined or not."

"You had not escaped on that occasion but for my connivance, Master Jocelyn," the man in the mask rejoined. "Now hear me. I am willing to befriend you on certain conditions; and, to prove my sincerity, I engage you shall go free if you accept them."

"I do not feel disposed to make any terms with you," Jocelyn said, sternly; "and as to my freedom of departure, I will take care that it is not hindered."

"I hold a warrant from the Star-Chamber for your arrest," said the man in the mask; "and you will vainly offer resistance if I choose to execute it. Let this be well understood before I proceed. And now to show you the extent of my information concerning you, and that I am fully aware of your proceedings, I will relate to you what you have done since you fled with that froward apprentice, whose tricks will assuredly bring him to Bridewell, from the Three Cranes. You were landed at London Bridge, and went thence with your companion to the Rose at Newington Butts, where you lay that night, and remained concealed, as you fancied, during the whole of the next day. I say, you fancied your retreat was unknown, because I was aware of it, and could have seized you had I been so disposed. The next night you removed to the Crown in Bishopsgate Street, and as you did not care to return to your lodgings near Saint Botolph's Church without Aldgate, you privily despatched Dick Taverner to bring your horses from the Falcon in Gracechurch Street, where you had left them, with the foolhardy intention of setting forth this morning to Theobalds, to try and obtain an interview of the King."

"You have spoken the truth," Jocelyn replied, in amazement; "but if you designed to arrest me, and could have done so, why did you defer your purpose?"

"Question me not on that point. Some day or other I may satisfy you. Not now. Enough that I have conceived a regard

for you, and will not harm you, unless compelled to do so by self-defence. Nay more, I will serve you. You must not go to Theobalds. 'Tis a mad scheme, conceived by a hot brain, and will bring destruction upon you. If you persist in it, I must follow you thither, and prevent greater mischief."

"Follow me, then, if you list," Jocelyn cried; "for go I shall. But be assured I will liberate myself from you if I can."

"Go, hot-headed boy," the man in the mask rejoined; but he then added quickly—"yet no! I will not deliver you thus to the power of your enemies without a further effort to save you. Since you are resolved to go to Theobalds, you must have a protector—a protector able to shield you even from Buckingham, whose enmity you have reason to dread. There is only one person who can do this, and that is Count Gondomar, the Spanish lieger-ambassador. Luckily, he is with the King now. In place of making any idle attempts to obtain an interview of his Majesty, or forcing yourself unauthorized on the royal presence, which will end in your arrest by the Knight Marshal, seek out Count Gondomar, and deliver this token to him. Tell him your story; and do what he bids you."

And as he spoke, the man in the mask held forth a ring, which Jocelyn took.

"I intended to make certain conditions with you," the mysterious personage pursued, "for the service I should render you, but you have thwarted my plans by your obstinacy, and I must reserve them to our next meeting. For we *shall* meet again, and that ere long; and then when you tender your thanks for what I have now done, I will tell you how to requite the obligation."

"I swear to requite it if I can, and as you desire," Jocelyn cried, struck by the other's manner.

"Enough!" the masked personage rejoined. "I am satisfied. Proceed on your way, and may good fortune attend you! Your destiny is in your own hands. Obey Count Gondomar's behests, and he will aid you effectually."

And without a word more, the man in the mask struck spurs into his horse's sides, and dashed down the hill, at a headlong pace, in the direction of London.

Jocelyn looked after him, and had not recovered from his surprise at the singular interview that had taken place when he disappeared.

By this time, Dick Taverner having regained his feet, limped towards him, leading his horse.

"It must be the fiend in person," quoth the apprentice, contriving to regain the saddle. "I trust you have made no compact with him, sir."

"Not a sinful one, I hope," Jocelyn replied, glancing at the ring.

And they proceeded on their way towards Tottenham, and were presently saluted by the merry ringing of bells, proclaiming some village festival.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MAY-QUEEN AND THE PURITAN'S DAUGHTER.

POPULAR sports and pastimes were wisely encouraged by James the First, whose great consideration for the enjoyments of the humbler classes of his subjects cannot be too highly commended; and since the main purpose of this history is to point out some of the abuses prevalent during his reign, it is but fair that at least one of the redeeming features should be mentioned. It has ever been the practice of sour-spirited sectarianism to discountenance recreations of any kind, however harmless, on the Sabbath; and several flagrant instances of this sort of interference, on the part of the puritanical preachers and their disciples, having come before James during his progress through the northern counties of England, and especially Lancashire, he caused, on his return to London, his famous Declaration concerning Lawful Sports on Sundays and Holidays to be promulgated; wherein a severe rebuke was administered to the Puritans and precisians, and the cause of the people espoused in terms, which, while most creditable to the monarch, are not altogether inapplicable to other times besides those in which they were delivered. "Whereas," says King James, in his Manifesto, "We did justly rebuke some Puritans and precise people, and took order that the like unlawful carriage should not be used by any of them hereafter, in the prohibiting and unlawful punishing of our good people for using their lawful recreations and honest exercises upon Sundays and other holidays, after the afternoon sermon or service: we now find that two sorts of people wherewith that country is much infested (we mean Papists and Puritans) have maliciously traduced those our just and honourable proceedings. And therefore we have thought good hereby to clear and make our pleasure to be manifested to all our good people in those parts." And he sums up his arguments, in favour of the licence granted, as follows:—"For when shall the common people have leave to exercise, if not upon the Sundays and holidays, seeing they must apply their labour, and win their living in all working days?" Truly an unanswerable proposition.

At the same time that these provisions for rational recreation were made, all unlawful games were prohibited. Conformity was strictly enjoined on the part of the Puritans themselves; and disobedience was rendered punishable by expatriation, as

in the case of recusants generally. Such was the tenour of the royal mandate addressed to the bishop of each diocese, and to all inferior clergy throughout the kingdom. Arbitrary it might be, but it was excellent in intention; for stubborn-necked personages had to be dealt with, with whom milder measures would have proved ineffectual. As it was, violent opposition was raised against the decree, and, the Puritanical preachers were loud in its condemnation, and as far as was consistent with safety, vehement in their attacks upon its royal author.

The boon, however, was accepted by the majority of the people in the spirit in which it was offered, and the licence afforded them was but little abused. Perfect success, indeed, must have attended the benign measure, had it not been for the efforts of the Puritanical and Popish parties, who made common cause against it, and strove by every means to counteract its beneficial influence: the first, because in the austerity of their faith they would not have the Sabbath in the slightest degree profaned, even by innocent enjoyment; the second, not because they cared about the fancied desecration of the Lord's day, but because they would have no other religion enjoy the same privileges as their own. Thus sectarianism and intolerance went for once hand in hand, and openly or covertly, as they found occasion, did their best to make the people dissatisfied with the benefit accorded them, trying to persuade them its acceptance would prejudice their eternal welfare.

Such arguments, however, had no great weight with the masses, who could not be brought to see any heinous or deadly sin in lawful recreation or exercises after divine service, always provided the service itself were in no respect neglected; and so the king's decree prevailed over all sectarian opposition, and was fully carried out. The merry month of May became really a season of enjoyment, and was kept as a kind of floral festival in every village throughout the land. May-games Whitsun-ales, morris-dances, were renewed as in bygone times; and all robust and healthful sports, as leaping, vaulting, and archery, were not only permitted on Sundays by the authorities, but enjoined.

These preliminary remarks are made for the better understanding of what is to follow.

We have already stated that long before Jocelyn and his companion reached Tottenham, they were made aware, by the ringing of bells from its old ivy-grown church tower, and by other joyful sounds, that some festival was taking place there; and the nature of the festival was at once revealed, as they entered the long straggling street, then, as now, constituting the chief part of the pretty little village, and beheld a large assemblage of country folk, in holiday attire, wending their way towards the green for the purpose of setting up a May-pole upon it, and making the welkin ring with their gladsome shouts.

All the youths and maidens of Tottenham and its vicinity, it appeared, had risen before daybreak that morning, and sallied forth into the woods to cut green boughs, and gather wild-flowers, for the ceremonial. At the same time they selected and hewed down a tall, straight tree—the tallest and straightest they could find; and stripping off its branches, placed it on a wain, and dragged it to the village with the help of an immense team of oxen, numbering as many as forty yoke. Each ox had a garland of flowers fastened to the tip of its horns; and the tall spar itself was twined round with ropes of daffodils, blue-bells, cowslips, primroses, and other early flowers, while its summit was surmounted with a floral crown, and festooned with garlands, various-coloured ribands, kerchiefs, and streamers. The fore-most yokes of oxen had bells hung round their necks, which they shook as they moved along, adding their blithe melody to the general hilarious sounds.

When the festive throng reached the village, all its inhabitants —male and female—old and young—rushed forth to greet them; and such as were able to leave their dwellings for a short while joined in the procession, at the head of which, of course, was borne the May-pole. After it came a band of young men, armed with the necessary implements for planting the shaft in the ground; and after them a troop of maidens, bearing bundles of rushes. Next came the minstrels, playing merrily on tabor, fife, sacbut, rebec, and tambourine. Then followed the Queen of the May, walking by herself,—a rustic beauty, hight Gillian Green-ford,—fancifully and prettily arrayed for the occasion, and attended, at a little distance, by Robin Hood, Maid Marian, Friar Tuck, the hobby-horse, and a band of morris-dancers. Then came the crowd, pell-mell, laughing, shouting, and huzza-ing,—most of the young men and women bearing green branches of birch and other trees in their hands.

The spot selected for the May-pole was a piece of greensward in the centre of the village, surrounded by picturesque habita-tions, and having, on one side of it, the ancient Cross. The latter, however, was but the remnant of the antique structure, the cross having been robbed of its upper angular bar, and otherwise mutilated, at the time of the Reformation, and it was now nothing more than a high wooden pillar, partly cased with lead to protect it from the weather, and supported by four great spurs.

Arrived at the green, the wain was brought to a halt; the crowd forming a vast circle round it, so as not to interfere with the proceedings. The pole was then taken out, reared aloft, and so much activity was displayed, so many eager hands assisted, that in an inconceivably short space of time it was firmly planted in the ground; whence it shot up like the central mast of a man-of-war, far overtopping the roofs of the adjoining houses, and

looking very gay indeed, with its floral crown a-top, and its kerchiefs and streamers fluttering in the breeze.

Loud and reiterated shouts broke from the assemblage on the satisfactory completion of the ceremony, the church bells pealed merrily, and the minstrels played their most enlivening strains. The rushes were strewn on the ground at the foot of the May-pole, and arbours were formed, with marvellous celerity, in different parts of the green, with the branches of the trees. At the same time, the ancient Cross was decorated with boughs and garlands. The whole scene offered as pretty and cheerful a sight as could be desired; but there was one beholder, as will presently appear, who viewed it in a different light.

It now came to the Queen of the May's turn to advance to the pole, and stationing herself beneath it, the morris-dancers and the rest of the mummers formed a ring round her, and, taking hands, footed it merrily to the tune of "Green Sleeves."

Long before this, Jocelyn and his attendant had come up, and both were so much interested that they felt no disposition to depart. Gillian's attractions had already fired the inflammable heart of the apprentice, who could not withdraw his gaze from her; and so ardent were his looks, and so expressive his gestures of admiration, that ere long he succeeded, to his no small delight, in attracting her notice in return.

Gillian Greenford was a bright-eyed, fair-haired young creature; light, laughing, radiant; with cheeks soft as peach-bloom, and beautifully tinged with red, lips carnation hued, and teeth white as pearls. Her parti-coloured, linsey-woolsey petticoats looped up on one side disclosed limbs with no sort of rustic clumsiness about them; but, on the contrary, a particularly neat formation both of foot and ankle. Her scarlet bodice, which, like the lower part of her dress, was decorated with spangles, bugles, and tinsel ornaments of various kinds,—very resplendent in the eyes of the surrounding swains, as well as in those of Dick Taverner,—her bodice, we say, spanning a slender waist, was laced across, while the snowy kerchief beneath it did not totally conceal a very comely bust. A wreath of natural flowers was twined very gracefully within her waving and almost lint-white locks, and in her hand she held a shepherdess's crook. Such was the beauty of Tottenham, and the present Queen of the May. Dick Taverner thought her little less than angelic, and there were many besides who shared in his opinion.

If Dick had been thus captivated on the sudden, Jocelyn had not escaped similar fascination from another quarter. It befel in this way:—

At an open oriel window, in one of the ancient and picturesque habitations before described as facing the green, stood a young maiden, whose beauty was of so high an order, and so peculiar a character, that it at once attracted and fixed attention. Such,

at least, was the effect produced by it on Jocelyn. Shrinking from the public gaze, and, perhaps, from some motive connected with religious scruples, scarcely deeming it right to be a spectator of the passing scene, this fair maiden was so placed as to be almost screened from general view. Yet it chanced that Jocelyn, from the circumstance of being on horseback, and from his position, was able to command a portion of the room in which she stood; and he watched her for some minutes before she became aware she was the object of his regards. When, at length, she perceived that his gaze was steadily fixed upon her, a deep blush suffused her cheeks, and she would have instantly retired if the young man had not at once lowered his looks. Still, he ever and anon ventured a glance towards the oriel window, and was delighted to find the maiden still there; nay, he fancied she must have advanced a step or two, for he could unquestionably distinguish her features more plainly. And lovely they were—most lovely! pensive in expression, and perhaps a thought too pale, until the crimsoning tide had mounted to her cheek. Thus mantled with blushes, her countenance might gain something in beauty, but it lost much of the peculiar charm which it derived from extreme transparency and whiteness of skin—a tint which set off to perfection the splendour of her magnificent black eyes, with their darkly-fringed lids and brows, while it also relieved, in an equal degree, the jetty lustre of her hair. Her features were exquisitely chiselled, delicate and classical in mould, and stamped with refinement and intelligence. Perfect simplicity, combined with a total absence of personal ornament, distinguished her attire; and her raven hair was plainly but by no means unbecomingly, braided over her snowy forehead. Something in this simplicity of costume and in her manner inclined Jocelyn to think the fair maiden must belong to some family professing puritanical opinions; and he found, upon inquiry from one of his neighbours in the throng—an old farmer—that this was actually the case.

The young lady was Mistress Aveline Calveley, his informant said, only child of Master Hugh Calveley, who had but lately come to dwell in Tottenham, and of whom little was known, save that he was understood to have fought at the battle of Langside, and served with great bravery, under Essex, both in Spain and in Ireland, in the times of good Queen Bess—such times as England would never see again, the old farmer parenthetically remarked, with a shake of the head. Master Hugh Calveley, he went on to say, was a strict Puritan, austere in his life and morose in manner; an open railer against the licence of the times and the profligacy of the court minions, in consequence of which he had more than once got himself into trouble. He abhorred all such sports as were now going forward; and had successfully interfered with the parish priest, Sir Onesimus, who

was somewhat of a precisian himself, to prevent the setting up the May-pole on the past Sunday, for which, the farmer added, some of the young folks owe him a grudge; and he expressed a hope at the same time that the day might pass by without any exhibition being made of their ill-will towards him.

"These Puritans are not in favour with our youth," the old man said; "and no great marvel they be not; for they check them in their pleasures, and reprove them for harmless mirth. Now, as to Mistress Aveline herself, she is devout and good; but she takes no part in the enjoyments proper to her years, and leads a life more like a nun in a convent, or a recluse in a cell, than a marriageable young lady. She never stirs forth without her father, and, as you may suppose, goes more frequently to lecture, or to church, or to some conventicle, than anywhere else. Such a life would not suit my grandchild, Gillian, at all. Nevertheless, Mistress Aveline is a sweet young lady, much beloved for her kindness and goodness; and her gentle words have healed many a wound occasioned by the harsh speech and severe reproofs of her father. There, sir, you may behold her fair and saintly countenance now. She seems pleased with the scene, and I am sure she well may be; for it is always a pleasant and a heart-cheering sight to see folks happy and enjoying themselves; and I cannot think that the beneficent Power above ever intended we should make ourselves miserable on earth in order to win a place in heaven. I am an old man, sir; and feeling this to be true, I have ever inculcated my opinions upon my children and grandchildren. Yet I confess I am surprised—knowing what I do of her father's character—that Mistress Aveline should indulge herself with beholding this profane spectacle, which ought, by rights, to be odious in her eyes."

The latter part of this speech was uttered with a sly chuckle on the part of the old farmer, not altogether agreeable to Jocelyn. The growing interest he felt in the fair Puritan rendered him susceptible. The eyes of the two young persons had met again more than once, and were not quite so quickly withdrawn on either side as before; perhaps, because Aveline was less alarmed by the young man's appearance, or more attracted by it; and perhaps, on his part, because he had grown a little bolder. We know not how this might be; but we *do* know that the fair Puritan had gradually advanced towards the front of the window, and was now leaning slightly out of it, so that her charms of face and figure were more fully revealed.

Meanwhile, the May-pole had been planted, and the first dance round it concluded. At its close, Gillian, quitting her post of honour near the tree, and leaving the morris-dancers and mummers to resume their merry rounds, unsanctioned by her sovereign presence, took a tambourine from one of the minstrels, and proceeded to collect gratuities within it intended for the

hired performers in the ceremony. She was very successful in her efforts, as the number of coins, soon visible within the tambourine, showed. Not without blushing and some hesitation did the May-Queen approach Dick Taverner. The 'prentice made a pretence of fumbling in his pouch, in order to prolong the interview which chance had thus procured him; and after uttering all the complimentary phrases he could muster, and looking a great deal more than he said, he wound up his speech by declaring he would bestow a mark (and that was no slight sum, for the highest coin yet given was a silver groat) upon the minstrels, if they would play a lively dance for him, and she, the May-Queen, would grace him with her hand in it. Encouraged by the laughter of the bystanders, and doubtless entertaining no great dislike to the proposal, Gillian, with a little affected coyness, consented; and the mark was immediately deposited in the tambourine by Dick, who, transported by his success, sprang from his saddle, and committing his steed to the care of a youth near him, whom he promised to reward for his trouble, followed close after the May-Queen, as she proceeded with her collection. Ere long she came to Jocelyn, and held out the tambourine towards him. An idea just then occurred to the young man.

"You have a pretty nosegay there, fair maiden," he said, pointing to a bunch of pinks and other fragrant flowers in her breast. "I will buy it from you, if you list."

"You shall have it and welcome, fair sir," Gillian replied, detaching the bouquet from her dress, and offering it to him.

"Well done, Gillian," the old farmer cried, approvingly.

"Ah! are you there, grandsire!" the May-Queen exclaimed. "Come! your gift for the minstrels and mummers—quick! quick!"

And while old Greenford searched for a small coin, Jocelyn placed a piece of silver in the tambourine.

"Will you do me a favour, my pretty maiden?" he said, courteously.

"That I will, right willingly, fair sir," she replied; "provided I may do it honestly."

"You shall not do it else," old Greenford observed.

"Come, your gift, grandsire—you are slow in finding it."

"Have patience, wench, have patience. Young folks are always in a hurry. Here 'tis!"

"Only a silver groat!" she exclaimed, tossing her head. "Why this young man behind me gave a mark; and so did this gallant gentleman on horseback."

"Poh! poh! go along, wench. They will take better care of their money when they grow older."

"Stay, my pretty maiden," Jocelyn cried; "you have promised to do me a favour."

"What is it?" she inquired.

"Present this nosegay on my part to the young lady in yonder window."

"What! offer this to Mistress Aveline Calveley?" Gillian exclaimed, in surprise. "Are you sure she will accept it, sir?"

"Tut! do his bidding, child, without more ado," old Greenford interposed. "I shall like to see what will come of it—ha! ha!"

Gillian could not help smiling, too, and proceeded on her mission. Jocelyn put his horse into motion, and slowly followed her, almost expecting Aveline to withdraw. But he was agreeably disappointed by finding her maintain her place at the window. She must have remarked what was going forward, and therefore her tarrying emboldened him, and buoyed up his hopes.

Arrived beneath the window, Gillian committed the tambourine to Dick Taverner, who still hovered behind her like her shadow, and fastening the bouquet to the end of her shepherdess's crook, held it up towards Aveline, crying out, in a playful tone, and with an arch look, "'Tis a love gift to Mistress Aveline Calveley on the part of that young cavalier."

Whether the offering, thus presented, would have been accepted may be questioned; but it was never destined to reach her for whom it was intended. Scarcely was the flower-laden crook uplifted, than a man of singularly stern aspect, with grey hair cut close to the head, grizzled beard, and military habiliments of ancient make, suddenly appeared behind Aveline, and seizing the nosegay, cast it angrily and contemptuously forth, so that it fell at Jocelyn's feet.

CHAPTER XV.

HUGH CALVELEY.

Jocelyn at once comprehended that the person who had thus dashed the nosegay to the ground could be no other than Hugh Calveley. But all doubt on the point was removed by Aveline herself, who exclaimed in a reproachful tone—"O father! what have you done?"

"What have I done?" the Puritan rejoined, speaking in a loud voice, as if desirous that his words should reach the assemblage outside. "I have done that which thou thyself shouldst have done, Aveline. I have signified my abhorrence of this vain ceremonial. But wherefore do I find you here? This is no fitting sight for any discreet maiden to witness; and little did I think that daughter of mine would encourage such profane displays by her presence. Little did I think that you, Aveline, would look on and smile while these ignorant and benighted folk set up their

idol, piping, dancing, and singing around it as the Gentiles did at the dedications of their deities. For it *is* an idol they have set up, and they have become like the heathens, worshippers of stocks and stones. Are we not expressly forbidden by the Holy Scriptures to make unto ourselves idols and graven images? The sins of idolatry and superstition will assuredly provoke the Divine displeasure, and kindle the fire of its wrath, as they did in the days of Moses, after the worshipping of the Golden Calf by the Israelites. Thus spake offended Heaven:—'Let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them.' Grievously will the Lord punish such as are guilty of these sins, for hath He not declared, as we read in Leviticus, 'I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries to desolation'? And be assured, O daughter, that heavy judgments will descend upon the land, if warning be not taken in time."

"Nay, dear father, I cannot view the matter in the same serious light that you do," Aveline rejoined; "neither do I think evil can be derived from pastimes like the present, unless by the evil-disposed. I must frankly own that it is pleasant to me to witness such innocent enjoyment as is here exhibited; while as to yon May-pole, with its pretty floral decorations, I can never be brought to regard it as an emblem of superstition and idolatry. Nevertheless, had you commanded me to refrain from the sight, I would unhesitatingly have obeyed you. But I thought I was free to follow my own inclinations."

"Why, so you were, child," the Puritan rejoined, "because I had full reliance on you, and did not conceive you could have been so easily beguiled by Satan. I lament to find you cannot discern the superstition and wickedness lurking within this false, though fair-seeming spectacle. Do you not perceive that in setting up this wooden idol, and worshipping it, these people are returning to the dark and sinful practices of paganism, of which it is an undoubted remnant? If you cannot discern this, I will make it manifest to you anon. But I tell you now briefly," he continued, in a voice of thunder, calculated to reach those at a distance, "that the ceremony is impious; that those who take part in it are idolaters; and that those who look on and approve are participators in the sin; yea, are equal in sin to the actors themselves."

Hereupon some murmurs of displeasure arose among the crowd, but they were instantly checked by the curiosity generally felt to hear Aveline's reply, which was delivered in clear and gentle, but distinct tones.

"Far be it from me to dispute with you, dear father," she said; "and it is with reluctance that I offer an opinion at all adverse to your own. But it seems to me impossible to connect these pastimes with heathenish and superstitious rites; for though

they may bear some resemblance to ceremonials performed in honour of the goddesses Maia and Flora; yet, such creeds being utterly forgotten, and their spirit extinct, it cannot revive in sports that have merely reference to harmless enjoyment. Not one, I am sure, of these worthy folk has the slightest thought of impiety."

"You know not what you say, girl," the Puritan rejoined, sharply. "The evil spirit is *not* extinct, and these growing abominations prove it to be again raising its baleful crest to pollute and destroy. Listen to my words, ye vain and foolish ones!" he continued, advancing to the front of the window, and stretching forth his arms towards the assemblage. "Repent! and amend your ways ere it be too late! Hew down the offensive idol, which you term your May-pole, and cast it into the flames! Cease your wanton sports, your noisy pipings, your profane dances, your filthy tipplings. Hear what the prophet Isaiah saith:—'Wo to them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink.' And again:—'Wo to the drunkards of Ephraim.' And I say, Wo unto you also, for you are like unto those drunkards. 'O do not this abominable thing that my soul hateth.' Be not guilty of the brutish sin of drunkenness. Reflect on the words of holy Job,—'They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in mirth, and in a moment go down to the grave.' Hew down your idol, I say again. Consume it utterly, and scatter its ashes to the winds. Strip off the gauds and tinsel in which you have decked your foolish May-Queen. Have done with your senseless and profane mummeries; and dismiss your Robin Hoods, your Friar Tucks, and your hobby-horses. Silence your pestilent minstrels, and depart peaceably to your own homes. Abandon your sinful courses, or assuredly 'the Lord will come upon you unawares, and cut you in sunder, and appoint your portion among unbelievers.'"

So sonorous was the voice of the Puritan, so impressive were his looks and gestures, that his address commanded general attention. While he continued to speak, the sports were wholly stopped. The minstrels left off playing to listen to him, and the mummers suspended their merry evolutions round the May-pole. The poor denounced May-Queen, who on the rejection of her nosegay had flown back to Jocelyn, now looked doubly disconcerted at this direct attack upon her and her finery, and pouted her pretty lips in vexation. Dick Taverner, who stood by her side, seemed disposed to resent the affront, and shook his fist menacingly at the Puritan. Jocelyn himself was perplexed and annoyed, for though inclined to take part with the assemblage, the growing interest he felt in Aveline forbade all interference with her father.

CHAPTER XVI.

OF THE SIGN GIVEN BY THE PURITAN TO THE ASSEMBLAGE.

Meanwhile a great crowd had collected beneath the window, and though no interruption was offered to the speaker, it was easy to discern, from the angry countenances of his hearers, what was the effect of the address upon them. When he had done, Hugh Calveley folded his arms upon his breast, and sternly regarded the assemblage.

He was well stricken in years, as his grizzled hair and beard denoted; but neither was his strength impaired, nor the fire of his eye dimmed. Squarely built, with hard and somewhat massive features, strongly stamped with austerity, he was distinguished by a soldierlike deportment and manner, while his bronzed countenance, which bore upon it more than one cicatrice, showed he must have been exposed to foreign suns, and seen much service. There was great determination about the mouth, and about the physiognomy generally, while at the same time there was something of the wildness of fanaticism in his looks. He was habited in a buff jerkin with a brown lackered breast-plate over it, thigh-pieces of a similar colour and similar material, and stout leathern boots. A broad belt with a heavy sword attached to it crossed his breast, and round his neck was a plain falling band. You could not regard Hugh Calveley without feeling he was a man to die a martyr in any cause he had espoused.

A deep groan was now directed against him. But it moved not a muscle of his rigid countenance.

Jocelyn began to fear, from the menacing looks of the crowd, that some violence might be attempted, and he endeavoured to check it.

"Bear with him, worthy friends," he cried, "he means you well, though he may reprove you somewhat too sharply."

"Beshrew him for an envious railer," cried a miller, "he mars all our pleasures with his peevish humours. He would have us all as discontented with the world as himself; but we know better. He will not let us have our lawful sports as enjoined by the king himself on Sundays, and he now tries to interfere with our recreations on holidays. A pest upon him for a canker-bitten churl!"

"His sullen looks are enough to turn all the cream in the village sour," observed an old dame.

"Why doth he not betake himself to the conventicle, and preach there?" old Greenford cried. "Why should we have all these bitter texts of scripture thrown at our heads? Why should we be likened to the drunkards of Ephraim because we drink

our Whitsun-ales? I have tasted nothing more than my morning cup as yet."

"Why should our May-pole be termed an idol? Answer me that, good grandsire," Gillian demanded.

"Nay, let him who called it so answer thee, child, for I cannot," the old farmer rejoined. "I can see nought idolatrous in it."

"Why should our pretty May-Queen be despoiled of her ornaments because they please not his fanatical taste?" Dick Taverner demanded. "For my part, I can discern no difference between a Puritan and a knave, and I would hang both."

This sally met with a favourable reception from the crowd, and a voice exclaimed—"Ay, hang all knavish Puritans."

Again Hugh Calveley lifted up his voice. "Think not to make me afraid," he cried; "I have confronted armed hosts with boldness when engaged in a worse cause than this, and I am not likely to give way before a base rabble, now that I have become a soldier of Christ, and fight his battles. I repeat my warnings to you, and will not hold my peace till you give heed to them. Continue not in the sins of the Gentiles, lest their punishment come upon you. These are fearful times we live in. London is become another Nineveh, and will be devoured by flames like that great city. It is full of corruption and debauchery, of oppressions, thefts, and deceits. With the prophet Nahum I exclaim—'Wo to the city, it is full of lies and robbery!' What griping usury, what extortion are practised within it! What fraud, what injustice, what misrule! But the Lord's anger will be awakened against it. Palaces of kings are of no more account in His eyes than cottages of peasants.—'He cutteth off the spirits of princes; he is terrible to the kings of the earth.' He knoweth no difference between them that sit on thrones, and those that go from door to door. For what saith the prophet Isaiah?—'I will punish the stout heart of the King of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.' Let the great ones of the land be warned as well as the meanest, or judgment will come upon them."

"Methinks that smacks of treason," cried Dick Taverner. "Our Puritan has quitted us poor fowl to fly at higher game. Hark ye, sir!" he added to Hugh Calveley; "you would not dare utter such words as those in the king's presence."

"Thou art mistaken, friend," the other rejoined. "It is my purpose to warn him in terms strong as those I have just used. Why should I hold my peace, when I have a mission from on high? I shall speak to the king as Nathan spoke to David."

"He speaks like a prophet," cried the miller; "I begin to have faith in him. No doubt the iniquities of London are fearful."

"If he preach against extortioners and usurers only, I am with him," Dick Taverner said. "If he rid London of Sir Giles

Mompesson and his peers, he will do good service—still better, if he will put down corruption and injustice as exhibited in the Court of Star-Chamber—eh, Master Jocelyn Mounchensey?"

At the mention of this name the Puritan appeared greatly surprised, and looked round inquiringly, till his eye alighted upon the young man.

After regarding him for a moment fixedly, he demanded—"Art thou Jocelyn Mounchensey?"

The young man, equally surprised, replied in the affirmative.

"The son of Sir Ferdinando Mounchensey, of Massingham, in Norfolk?" inquired the Puritan.

"The same," Jocelyn answered.

"Thy father was my nearest and dearest friend, young man," Hugh Calveley said; "and thy father's son shall be welcome to my dwelling. Enter, I pray of you. Yet pause for a moment. I have a word more to declare to these people. Ye heed not my words, and make a mock of me," he continued, addressing the assemblage: "but I will give you a sign that I have spoken the truth."

"He will bring the devil among us, I trow," cried Dick Taverner.

"'Tis to be hoped he will not split the May-pole with a thunderbolt," said the miller.

"Nor spoil our Whitsun-ales," cried old Greenford.

"Nor lame our hobby-horse," said one of the mummers.

"Nor rob me of my wreath and garlands," said Gillian.

"That he shall not, I promise you, fair May-Queen!" Dick Taverner rejoined, gallantly.

"I will do none of these things. I would not harm you, even if I had the power," the Puritan said. "But I will discharge a bolt against the head of yon idol," he added, pointing towards the flower-crowned summit of the May-pole; "and if I break its neck and cast it down, ye will own that a higher hand than mine directs the blow, and that the superstitious symbol ought not to be left standing."

"As to what we may do, or what we may acknowledge, we will give no promise, Master Hugh Calveley," rejoined old Greenford. "But e'en let fly thy bolt, if thou wilt."

Some dissent was offered to this singular proposition, but the majority of voices overruled it; and withdrawing for a moment, Hugh Calveley returned with an arbalist, which he proceeded deliberately to arm in view of the crowd, and then placed a quarrel within it.

"In the name of the Lord, who cast down the golden idol made by Aaron and the Israelites, I launch this bolt," he cried, as he took aim, and liberated the cord.

The short, iron-headed, square-pointed arrow whizzed through the air, and, by the mischief it did as it hit its mark, seemed to

confirm the Puritan's denunciation. Striking the May-pole precisely at the summit, it shattered the wood, and brought down the floral crown surmounting it, as well as the topmost streamers.

The spectators stared aghast.

"Be warned by this!" thundered Hugh Calveley, with gloomy triumph. "Your idol is smitten—not by my hand, but by His who will chastise your wickedness."

Whereupon he closed the window, and departed. Presently afterwards, the door was opened by an old, grave-looking, decently-clad serving-man. Addressing Jocelyn, who had already dismounted and given his horse in charge to the youth engaged for a similar purpose by Dick Taverner, this personage invited him, in his master's name, to enter; and, with a heart throbbing with emotion, the young man complied. Chance seemed to befriend him in a way he could never have anticipated; and he now hoped to obtain an interview with Aveline.

His conductor led him through a passage to a large chamber at the back of the house, with windows looking upon a garden. The room was panelled with dark shining oak, had a polished floor, an immense chimney-piece, and a moulded ceiling. Within it were a few high-backed chairs, and some other cumbrous furniture; while on an oak table at the side was spread the simple morning repast of the Puritan and his daughter. But all these things were lost upon Jocelyn, who had eyes only for one object. She was there, and how lovely she appeared! How exquisite in figure—how faultless in feature! Some little embarrassment was discoverable in her manner as the young man entered, but it quickly disappeared. Her father was with her; and, advancing towards Jocelyn, he took him kindly by the hand, and bade him welcome. Then, without relinquishing his grasp, he presented the young man to his daughter, saying—

"This is Jocelyn, the son of my dear departed friend, Sir Ferdinando Mounchensey. Some inscrutable design of Providence has brought him hither, and right glad I am to behold him. Years ago, his father rendered me a signal service, which I requited as I best could; and there is nothing I would not gladly do for the son of such a friend. You will esteem him accordingly, Aveline."

"I will not fail in my duty, father," she replied, blushing slightly.

And Jocelyn thought these words were the sweetest he had ever heard pronounced.

"I would pray you to break your fast with us, if our simple fare will content you," said Hugh Calveley, pointing to the table.

"I am not over-dainty, and shall do ample justice to whatever is set before me," Jocelyn replied, smiling.

"It is well," said the Puritan. "I am glad to find the son of

my old friend is not a slave to his appetites, as are most of the young men of this generation."

With this they approached the board; and, a lengthy grace being pronounced by Hugh Calveley, Jocelyn sat down by the side of Aveline, scarcely able to believe in the reality of his own happiness—so like a dream it seemed.

CHAPTER XVII.

A RASH PROMISE.

During the slender repast, Jocelyn, in reply to the inquiries of the Puritan, explained the twofold motive of his coming to London; namely, the desire of taking vengeance on his father's enemies, and the hope of obtaining some honourable employment, such as a gentleman might accept.

"My chances in the latter respect are not very great," he said, "seeing I have no powerful friends to aid me in my endeavours, and I must consequently trust to fortune. But as regards my enemies, if I can only win an audience of the king, and plead my cause before him, I do not think he will deny me justice."

"Justice!" exclaimed the Puritan, with deep scorn. "James Stuart knows it not. An arch-hypocrite, and perfidious as hypocritical, he holdeth as a maxim that Dissimulation is necessary to a Ruler. He has the cowardice and the ferocity of the hyæna. He will promise fairly, but his deeds will falsify his words. Recollect how his Judas kiss betrayed Somerset. Recollect his conduct towards the Gowries. But imagine not, because you have been evil intreated and oppressed, that the king will redress your wrongs, and reinstate you in your fallen position. Rather will he take part with the usurers and extortioners who have deprived you of your inheritance. How many poor wretches doth he daily condemn to the same lingering agonies and certain destruction that he doomed your father. Lamentable as is the good Sir Ferdinando's case, it stands not alone. It is one of many. And many, many more will be added to the list, if this tyrannical Herodias be suffered to govern."

And, as if goaded by some stinging thought, that drove him nigh distracted, Hugh Calveley arose, and paced to and fro within the chamber. His brow became gloomier, and his visage sterner.

"Bear with him, good Master Jocelyn," Aveline said, in a low tone. "He hath been unjustly treated by the king, and, as you see, can ill brook the usage. Bear with him, I pray of you."

Jocelyn had no time to make reply. Suddenly checking himself, and fixing his earnest gaze upon the young man, the Puritan said—

"Give ear to me, my son. If I desired to inflame your breast with rage against this tyrant, I should need only to relate one instance of his cruelty and injustice. I had a friend—a very dear friend," he continued, in a tone of deep pathos—"confined within the Fleet Prison by a decree of the Star-Chamber. He was to me as a brother, and to see him gradually pining away cut me to the soul. Proud by nature, he refused to abase himself to his oppressor, and could not be brought to acknowledge wrongs he had never committed. Pardon, therefore, was denied him—not pardon merely, but all mitigation of suffering. My friend had been wealthy; but heavy fines and penalties had stripped him of his possessions, and brought him to destitution. Lord of an ancient hall, with woods and lands around it, wherein he could ride for hours without quitting his own domains, his territories were now narrowed to a few yards, while one dark, dreary chamber was alone accorded him. Finding he must necessarily perish, if left to rot there, I prevailed upon him (not without much reluctance on his part) to petition the king for liberation; and was myself the bearer of his prayer. Earnestly pleading the cause of the unfortunate man, and representing his forlorn condition, I besought his majesty's gracious intercession. But when I had wearied the royal ear with entreaties, the sharp reply was—'Doth he make submission? Will he confess his offence?' And as I could only affirm, that as he was guilty of no crime, so he could confess none, the king returned me the petition, coldly observing—'The dignity of our Court of Star-Chamber must be maintained before all things. He hath been guilty of contempt towards it, and must purge him of the offence.' 'But the man will die, sire,' I urged, 'if he be not removed from the Fleet. His prison-lodging is near a foul ditch, and he is sick with fever. Neither can he have such aid of medicine or of nursing as his case demands.' 'The greater reason he should relieve himself by speedy acknowledgment of the justice of his sentence,' said the king. 'The matter rests not with us, but with himself.' 'But he is a gentleman, sire,' I persisted, 'to whom truth is dearer than life, and who would rather languish in misery for thrice the term he is likely to last, than forfeit his own self-esteem by admitting falsehood and injustice.' 'Then let him perish in his pride and obstinacy,' cried the king, impatiently. And thereupon he dismissed me."

"O sir!" exclaimed Jocelyn, rising and throwing his arms round the Puritan's neck; "you, then, were the friend who tended my poor father in his last moments. Heaven bless you for it!"

"Yes, Jocelyn, it was I who heard your father's latest sigh,"

the Puritan replied, returning his embrace; "and your own name was breathed with it. His thoughts were of his son far away — too young to share his distresses, or to comprehend them."

"Alas! alas!" cried Jocelyn, mournfully.

"Lament not for your father, Jocelyn," said the Puritan, solemnly; "he is reaping the reward of his earthly troubles in heaven! Be comforted, I say. The tyrant can no longer oppress him. He is beyond the reach of his malice. He can be arraigned at no more unjust tribunals. He is where no cruel and perfidious princes, no iniquitous judges, no griping extortioners shall ever enter."

Jocelyn endeavoured to speak, but his emotion overpowered him.

"I have already told you that your father rendered me a service impossible to be adequately requited," pursued the Puritan. "What that service was I will one day inform you. Suffice it now, that it bound me to him in chains firmer than brass. Willingly would I have laid down my life for him, if he had desired it. Gladly would I have taken his place in the Fleet Prison, if that could have procured him liberation. Unable to do either, I watched over him while he lived—and buried him when dead."

"O sir, you have bound me to you as strongly as you were bound to my father," cried Jocelyn. "For the devotion shown to him, I hold myself eternally your debtor."

The Puritan regarded him steadfastly for a moment.

"What if I were to put these professions to the test?" he asked.

"Do so," Jocelyn replied, earnestly. "My life is yours!"

"Your life!" exclaimed Hugh Calveley, grasping his arm almost fiercely, while his eye blazed. "Consider what you offer."

"I need not consider," Jocelyn rejoined. "I repeat, my life is yours, if you demand it."

"Perhaps I *shall* demand it," cried Hugh Calveley. "Ere long, perhaps."

"Demand it when you will," Jocelyn said.

"Father!" Aveline interposed, "do not let the young man bind himself by this promise. Release him, I pray of you."

"The promise cannot be recalled, my child," the Puritan replied. "But I shall never claim its fulfilment save for some high and holy purpose."

"Are you sure your purpose *is* holy, father?" Aveline said, in a low tone.

"What mean you, child?" cried Hugh Calveley, knitting his brows. "I am but an instrument in the hands of Heaven, appointed to do its work; and as directed, so I must act. Heaven may make me the scourge of the oppressor and evil-

doer, or the sword to slay the tyrant. I may die a martyr for my faith, or do battle for it with carnal weapons. For all these I am ready; resigning myself to the will of God. Is it for nothing, think'st thou, that this young man—the son of my dear departed friend—has been brought hither at this particular conjuncture? Is it for nothing that, wholly unsolicited, he has placed his life at my disposal, and in doing so has devoted himself to a great cause? Like myself, he hath wrongs to avenge, and the Lord of Hosts will give him satisfaction."

"But not in the way you propose, father," Aveline rejoined. "Heaven will assuredly give you both satisfaction for the wrongs you have endured; but it must choose its own means of doing so, and its own time."

"It *hath* chosen the means, and the time is coming quickly," cried the Puritan, his eye again kindling with fanatical light. "'The Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail.'"

"These things are riddles to me," observed Jocelyn, who had listened to what was passing with great uneasiness. "I would solicit an explanation?"

"You shall have it, my son," Hugh Calveley replied. "But not now. My hour for solitary prayer and self-communion is come, and I must withdraw to my chamber. Go forth into the garden, Jocelyn—and do thou attend him, Aveline. I will join you when my devotions are ended."

So saying, he quitted the room, while the youthful pair went forth as enjoined.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW THE PROMISE WAS CANCELLED.

It was a large garden, once fairly laid out and planted, but now sadly neglected. The broad terrace walk was overgrown with weeds; the stone steps and the carved balusters were broken in places, and covered with moss: the once smooth lawn was unconscious of the scythe; the parterres had lost their quaint devices; and the knots of flowers—tre-foil, cinque-foil, diamond and cross-bow—were no longer distinguishable in their original shapes. The labyrinths of the maze were inextricably tangled, and the long green alleys wanted clearing out.

But all this neglect passed unnoticed by Jocelyn, so completely was he engrossed by the fair creature at his side. Even the noise of the May-games, which, temporarily interrupted by Hugh Calveley, had recommenced with greater vigour than ever—the ringing of the church bells, the shouts of the crowd, and the sounds of the merry minstrelsy, scarcely reached his ear. For

the first time he experienced those delicious sensations which new-born love excites within the breast; and the enchantment operated upon him so rapidly and so strongly, that he was overpowered by its spell almost before aware of it. It seemed that he had never really lived till this moment; never, at least, comprehended the bliss afforded by existence in the companionship of a being able to awaken the transports he now experienced. A new world seemed suddenly opened to him, full of love, hope, sunshine, of which he and Aveline were the sole inhabitants. Hitherto his life had been devoid of any great emotion. The one feeling latterly pervading it had been a sense of deep wrong, coupled with the thirst of vengeance. No tenderer influence had softened his almost rugged nature; and his breast continued arid as the desert. Now the rock had been stricken, and the living waters gushed forth abundantly. Not that in Norfolk, and even in the remote part of the county where his life had been passed, female beauty was rare. Nowhere, indeed, is the flower of loveliness more thickly sown than in that favoured part of our isle. But all such young damsels as he had beheld had failed to move him; and if any shaft had been aimed at his breast it had fallen wide of the mark. Jocelyn Mounchensey was not one of those highly susceptible natures—quick to receive an impression, quicker to lose it. Neither would he have been readily caught by the lures spread for youth by the designing of the sex. Imbued with something of the antique spirit of chivalry, which yet, though but slightly, influenced the age in which he lived, he was ready and able to pay fervent homage to his mistress's sovereign beauty (supposing he had one), and maintain its supremacy against all questioners, but utterly incapable of worshipping at any meaner shrine. Heart-whole, therefore, when he encountered the Puritan's daughter, he felt that in her he had found an object he had long sought, to whom he could devote himself heart and soul; a maiden whose beauty was without peer, and whose mental qualities corresponded with her personal attractions.

Nor was it a delusion under which he laboured. Aveline Calveley was all his imagination painted her. Purity of heart, gentleness of disposition, intellectual endowments, were as clearly revealed by her speaking countenance as the innermost depths of a fountain are by the pellucid medium through which they are viewed. Hers was a virgin heart, which, like his own, had received no previous impression. Love for her father alone had swayed her; though all strong demonstrations of filial affection had been checked by that father's habitually stern manner. Brought up by a female relative in Cheshire, who had taken charge of her on her mother's death, which had occurred during her infancy, she had known little of her father till late years, when she had come to reside with him, and, though devout by

nature, she could ill reconcile herself to the gloomy notions of religion he entertained, or to the ascetic mode of life he practised. With no desire to share in the pomps and vanities of life, she could not be persuaded that cheerfulness was incompatible with righteousness; nor could all the railings she heard against them make her hate those who differed from her in religious opinions. Still she made no complaint. Entirely obedient to her father's will, she accommodated herself, as far as she could, to the rule of life prescribed by him. Aware of his pertinacity of opinion, she seldom or ever argued a point with him, even if she thought right might be on her side; holding it better to maintain peace by submission, than to hazard wrath by disputation. The discussion on the May-games was an exception to her ordinary conduct, and formed one of the few instances in which she had ventured to assert her own opinion in opposition to that of her father.

Of late, indeed, she had felt great uneasiness about him. Much changed, he seemed occupied by some dark, dread thought, which partially revealed itself in wrathful exclamations and muttered menaces. He seemed to believe himself chosen by Heaven as an instrument of vengeance against oppression; and her fears were excited lest he might commit some terrible act under this fatal impression. She was the more confirmed in the idea from the eagerness with which he had grasped at Jocelyn's rash promise, and she determined to put the young man upon his guard.

If, in order to satisfy the reader's curiosity, we are obliged to examine the state of Aveline's heart, in reference to Jocelyn, we must state candidly that no such ardent flame was kindled within it as burnt in the breast of the young man. That such a flame might arise was very possible, nay, even probable, seeing that the sparks of love were there; and material for combustion was by no means wanting. All that was required was, that those sparks should be gently fanned—not heedlessly extinguished.

Little was said by the two young persons, as they slowly paced the terrace. Both felt embarrassed: Jocelyn longing to give utterance to his feelings, but restrained by timidity—Aveline trembling lest more might be said than she ought to hear, or if obliged to hear, than she could rightly answer. Thus they walked on in silence. But it was a silence more eloquent than words, since each comprehended what the other felt. How much they would have said was proclaimed by the impossibility they found of saying anything!

At length Jocelyn stopped, and plucking a flower, observed, as he proffered it for her acceptance, "My first offering to you was rejected. May this be more fortunate."

"Make me a promise, and I will accept it," she replied.

"Willingly," cried Jocelyn, venturing to take her hand, and gazing at her tenderly. "Most willingly."

"You are far too ready to promise," she rejoined, with a sad, sweet smile. "What I desire is this. Recal your hasty pledge to my father, and aid me in dissuading him from the enterprise in which he would engage you."

As the words were uttered, the Puritan stepped from behind the alley, which had enabled him to approach them unperceived and overhear their brief converse.

"Hold!" he exclaimed, in a solemn tone, and regarding Jocelyn with great earnestness. "That promise is sacred. It was made in a father's name, and must be fulfilled. As to my purpose, it is unchangeable."

The enthusiast's influence over Jocelyn would have proved irresistible but for the interposition of Aveline.

"Be not controlled by him," she said, in a low tone, to the young man; adding to her father, "for my sake, let the promise be cancelled."

"Let him ask it, and it shall be," rejoined the Puritan, gazing steadily at the young man, as if he would penetrate his soul. "Do you hesitate?" he cried, in accents of deep disappointment, perceiving Jocelyn waver.

"You cannot misunderstand his wishes, father," said Aveline.

"Let him speak for himself," Hugh Calveley exclaimed, angrily. "Jocelyn Mounchensey!" he continued, folding his arms upon his breast, and regarding the young man fixedly as before, "son of my old friend! son of him who died in my arms! son of him whom I committed to the earth! if thou hast aught of thy father's true spirit, thou wilt rigidly adhere to a pledge voluntarily given, and which, uttered as it was uttered by thee, has all the sanctity, all the binding force of a vow before Heaven, where it is registered, and approved by him who is gone before us."

Greatly moved by this appeal, Jocelyn might have complied with it, but Aveline again interposed.

"Not so, father," she cried. "The spirits of the just made perfect—and of such is the friend you mention—would never approve of the design with which you would link this young man, in consequence of a promise rashly made. Discharge him from it, I entreat you."

Her energy shook even the Puritan's firmness.

"Be it as thou wilt, daughter," he said, after the pause of a few moments, during which he waited for Jocelyn to speak; but, as the young man said nothing, he rightly interpreted his silence, —"be it as thou wilt, since he, too, wills it so. I give him back his promise. But let me see him no more."

"Sir, I beseech you——" cried Jocelyn.

But he was cut short by the Puritan, who, turning from him contemptuously, said to his daughter—"Let him depart immediately."

Aveline signed to the young man to go; but finding him

remain motionless, she took him by the hand, and led him some way along the terrace. Then, releasing her hold, she bade him farewell!

"Wherefore have you done this?" inquired Jocelyn, reproachfully.

"Question me not; but be satisfied I have acted for the best," she replied. "O Jocelyn!" she continued anxiously, "if an opportunity should occur to you of serving my father, do not neglect it."

"Be assured I will not," the young man replied. "Shall we not meet again?" he asked, in a tone of deepest anxiety.

"Perhaps," she answered. "But you must go. My father will become impatient. Again farewell!"

On this they separated; the young man sorrowfully departing, while her footsteps retreated in the opposite direction.

Meanwhile the May-games went forward on the green with increased spirit and merriment, and without the slightest hindrance. More than once the mummers had wheeled their mazy rounds, with Gillian and Dick Taverner footing it merrily in the midst of them. More than once the audacious 'prentice, now become desperately enamoured of his pretty partner, had ventured to steal a kiss from her lips. More than once he had whispered words of love in her ear; though, as yet, he had obtained no tender response. Once—and once only—had he taken her hand; but then he had never quitted it afterwards. In vain other swains claimed her for a dance. Dick refused to surrender his prize. They breakfasted together in a little bower made of green boughs, the most delightful and lover-like retreat imaginable. Dick's appetite, furious an hour ago, was now clean gone. He could eat nothing. He subsisted on love alone. But as she was prevailed upon to sip from a foaming tankard of Whitsun-ale, he quaffed the remainder of the liquid with rapture. This done, they resumed their merry sports, and began to dance again. The bells continued to ring blithely, the assemblage to shout, and the minstrels to play. A strange contrast to what was passing in the Puritan's garden.

CHAPTER XIX.

THEOBALDS PALACE.

The magnificent palace of Theobalds, situated near Cheshunt, in Hertfordshire, originally the residence of the great Lord Treasurer Burleigh, and the scene of his frequent and sumptuous entertainments to Queen Elizabeth and the ambassadors to her Court, when she "was seen," says Stow, "in as great royalty,

THE MAY QUEEN.

and served as bountifully and magnificently, as at any other time or place, all at his lordship's charge; with rich shows, pleasant devices, and all manner of sports, to the great delight of her Majesty and her whole train, with great thanks from all who partook of it, and as great commendations from all that heard of it abroad:"—this famous and delightful palace, with its stately gardens, wherein Elizabeth had so often walked and held converse with her faithful counsellor; and its noble parks and chases, well stocked with deer, wherein she had so often hunted, came into possession of James the First, in the manner we shall proceed to relate, some years before the date of this history.

James first made acquaintance with Theobalds during his progress from Scotland to assume the English crown, and it was the last point at which he halted before entering the capital of his new dominions. Here, for four days, he and his crowd of noble attendants were guests of Sir Robert Cecil, afterwards Earl of Salisbury, who proved himself the worthy son of his illustrious and hospitable sire by entertaining the monarch and his numerous train in the same princely style that the Lord Treasurer had ever displayed towards Queen Elizabeth. An eye-witness has described the King's arrival at Theobalds on this occasion. "Thus, then," says John Savile, "for his Majesty's coming up the walk, there came before him some of the nobility, barons, knights, esquires, gentlemen, and others, amongst whom was the sheriff of Essex, and most of his men, the trumpets sounding next before his highness, sometimes one, sometimes another: his Majesty riding not continually betwixt the same two, but sometimes one, sometimes another, as seemed best to his highness; the whole nobility of our land and Scotland round about him observing no place of superiority, all bareheaded, all of whom alighted from their horses at their entrance into the first court, save only his Majesty alone, who rid along still, four noblemen laying their hands upon his steed, two before and two behind. In this manner he came to the court door, where I myself stood. At the entrance into that court stood many noblemen, amongst whom was Sir Robert Cecil, who there meeting his Majesty, conducted him into his house, all which was practised with as great applause of the people as could be, hearty prayer, and throwing up of hats. His Majesty had not stayed above an hour in his chamber, but hearing the multitude throng so fast into the uppermost court to see his highness, he showed himself openly out of his chamber window by the space of half an hour together; after which time he went into the labyrinth-like garden to walk, where he secreted himself in the Meander's compact of bays, rosemary, and the like overshadowing his walk, to defend him from the heat of the sun till supper time, at which was such plenty of provision for all sorts

of men in their due places as struck me with admiration. And first, to begin with the ragged regiments, and such as were debarred the privilege of any court, these were so sufficiently rewarded with beef, veal, mutton, bread, and beer, that they sung holiday every day, and kept a continual feast. As for poor maimed and distressed soldiers, which repaired thither for maintenance, the wine, money, and meat which they had in very bounteous sort, hath become a sufficient spur to them to blaze it abroad since their coming to London." The reader will marvel at the extraordinary and unstinting hospitality practised in those days, which, as we have shown, was exhibited to all comers, irrespective of rank, even to the "ragged regiments," and which extended its bounties in the shape of alms to the wounded and disabled veteran. We find no parallel to it in modern times.

Theobalds produced a highly favourable impression upon James, who, passionately attached to the chase, saw in its well-stocked parks the means of gratifying his tastes to the fullest extent. Its contiguity to Enfield Chase was also a great recommendation ; and its situation, beautiful in itself, was retired, and yet within easy distance of the metropolis. It appeared to him to combine all the advantages of a royal hunting-seat with all the splendours of a palace ; and his predilections were confirmed by a second visit paid by him to it in 1606, when he was accompanied by his brother-in-law, Christianus, King of Denmark, and when the two monarchs were gloriously entertained by the Earl of Salisbury. The Danish king drank inordinately : so did the whole of his suite ; and they soon inoculated the English Court with their sottish tastes. Bonnie King Jamie himself got *fou* twice a-day ; and, melancholy to relate, the ladies of the Court followed the royal example, and, "abandoning their sobriety, were seen to roll about in intoxication." So says Sir John Harington, who has given a very diverting account of the orgies at Theobalds, and the inebriate extravagances of Christianus. "One day," writes Sir John, "a great feast was held ; and after dinner the representation of Solomon's Temple and the coming of the Queen of Sheba was made, or (as I may better say) was meant to have been made, before their Majesties, by device of the Earl of Salisbury and others. But alas ! as all earthly things do fail to poor mortals in enjoyment, so did prove our presentment thereof. The lady that did play the Queen's part did carry most precious gifts to both their Majesties, but forgetting the steps arising to the canopy, overset her casket into his Danish Majesty's lap, and fell at his feet, though I rather think it was into his face. Much was the hurry and confusion. Cloths and napkins were at hand to make all clean. His Majesty then got up, and would dance with the Queen of Sheba ; but he fell down and humbled himself before her, and was carried to an

inner chamber, and laid on a bed of state. The entertainment and show went forward, and most of the presenters went backward, or fell down; wine did so occupy their upper chambers." Worthy Sir John seems to have been greatly scandalized, as he well might be, at these shameless proceedings, and he exclaims pathetically, "The Danes have again conquered the Britons: for I see no man, or woman either, that can command himself or herself." Nor does he fail to contrast these "strange pageantries" with what occurred of the same sort, in the same place, in Queen Elizabeth's time, observing, "I never did see such lack of good order, discretion and sobriety, as I have now done."

Having set his heart upon Theobalds, James offered the Earl of Salisbury, in exchange for it, the palace and domains of Hatfield; and the proposal being accepted (it could not very well be refused), the delivery of the much-coveted place was made on the 22nd May, 1607; the Prince Joinville, brother to the Duke de Guise, being present on the occasion, where fresh festivities were held, accompanied by an indifferent masque from Ben Jonson. Whether the King or the Earl had the best of the bargain, we are not prepared to decide.

Enchanted with his acquisition, James commenced the work of improvement and embellishment by enlarging the park, appropriating a good slice of Enfield Chase, with parts of Northaw and Cheshunt Commons, and surrounding the whole with a high brick wall ten miles in circumference. Within this ring he found ample scope for the indulgence of his hunting propensities, since it contained an almost inexhaustible stock of the finest deer in the kingdom; and within it might be heard the sound of his merry horn, and the baying of his favourite stag-hounds, whenever he could escape from the cares of state or the toils of the council-chamber. His escapes from these demands upon his time were so frequent, and the attraction of the woods of Theobalds so irresistible, that remonstrances were made to him on the subject; but they proved entirely ineffectual. He declared he would rather return to Scotland than forego his amusements.

Theobalds, in the time of its grandeur, might be styled the Fontainebleau of England. Though not to be compared with Windsor Castle in grandeur of situation or magnificence of forest scenery, still it was a stately residence, and worthy of the monarch of a mighty country. Crowned with four square towers of considerable height and magnitude, each with a lion and vane on the top, it had besides, a large, lantern-shaped central turret, proudly domineering over the others, and "made with timber of excellent workmanship, curiously wrought with divers pinnacles at each corner, wherein were hung twelve bells for chimage, and a clock with chimes of sundry work." The whole structure was

built, says the survey, "of excellent brick, with coigns, jambs, and cornices of stone." Approached from the south by a noble avenue of trees, planted in double rows, and a mile in length, it presented a striking and most picturesque appearance, with its lofty towers, its great gilded vanes, supported, as we have said, by lions, its crowd of twisted chimneys, its leaded and arched walks, its balconies, and its immense bay windows. Nor did it lose its majestic and beautiful aspect as you advanced nearer, and its vast proportions became more fully developed. Then you perceived its grand though irregular façades, its enormous gates, its cloistered walks, and its superb gardens; and comprehended that with its five courts and the countless apartments they contained, to say nothing of the world of offices, that the huge edifice comprised a town within itself—and a well-peopled town too. The members of the household, and the various retainers connected with it, were multitudinous as the rooms themselves.

One charm and peculiarity of the palace, visible from without, consisted in the arched walks before referred to, placed high up on the building on every side. Screened from the weather, these walks looked upon the different courts and gardens, and commanded extensive views of the lovely sylvan scenery around. Hence Cheshunt and Waltham Abbey, Enfield, and other surrounding villages, could be distinguished through the green vistas of the park.

On the south, facing the grand avenue, was "a large open cloister, built upon several large fair pillars of stone, arched over with seven arches, with a fair rail and balusters, well painted with the Kings and Queens of England, and the pedigree of the old Lord Burleigh, and divers other ancient families."

The body of the palace consisted of two large quadrangles: one of which, eighty-six feet square, was denominated the Fountain Court, from the circumstance of a fountain of black and white marble standing within it. The other quadrangle, somewhat larger, being one hundred and ten feet square, was called the Middle Court. In addition to these, there were three other smaller courts, respectively entitled the Dial Court, the Buttery Court, and the Dove-house Court, wherein the offices were situated.

On the east side of the Fountain Court stood an arched cloister; and on the ground-floor there was a spacious hall, paved with marble, and embellished with a curiously carved ceiling. Adjoining it were the apartments assigned to the Earl of Salisbury as Keeper of Theobalds, the council-chamber, and the chambers of Sir Lewis Lewkener, Master of the Ceremonies, and Sir John Finett. Above was the presence-chamber, wainscoted with oak, painted in liver-colour and gilded, having rich pendants from the ceiling, and vast windows resplendent with armorial bearings.

Near this were the privy-chamber and the King's bed-chamber, together with a wide gallery, one hundred and twenty-three feet in length, wainscoted and roofed like the presence-chamber, but yet more gorgeously fretted and painted. Its walls were ornamented with stags' heads with branching antlers. On the upper floor were the rooms assigned to the Duke of Lennox as Lord Chamberlain, and close to them was one of the external leaded walks before alluded to, sixty-two feet long and eleven wide, which, from its eminent position, carried the gaze to Ware.

In the Middle Court were the Queen's apartments, comprising her chapel, presence-chamber, and other rooms, and over them a gallery nearly equal in length to that reserved for the King. In this quadrangle, also, were Prince Charles's lodgings. Over the latter was the Green Gallery, one hundred and nine feet in length, and proportionately wide. And above the gallery was another external covered walk, wherein were two "lofty arches of brick, of no small ornament to the house, and rendering it comely and pleasant to all that passed by."

The gardens were enchanting, and in perfect keeping with the palace. Occupying several acres, they seemed infinitely larger than they were, since they abounded in intricate alleys, labyrinths, and mazes; so that you were easily lost within them, and sometimes wanted a clue to come forth. They contained some fine canals, fountains, and statues. In addition to the great gardens were the priory gardens, with other inclosures for pheasants, aviaries, and menageries; for James was very fond of wild beasts, and had a collection of them worthy of a zoological garden. In one of his letters to Buckingham, when the latter was at Madrid, we find him inquiring about the elephant, camels, and wild asses. He had always a camel-house at Theobalds. To close our description, we may add that the tennis-court, *manége*, stable, kennels, and falconry were on a scale of magnitude proportionate to the palace.

Beneath the wide-spreading branches of a noble elm, forming part of the great avenue, and standing at a short distance from the principal entrance to the palace, were collected together, one pleasant afternoon in May, a small group of persons, consisting almost entirely of the reader's acquaintances. Chief amongst them was Jocelyn Mounchensey, who, having dismounted and fastened his horse to the branch, was leaning against the large trunk of the tree, contemplating the magnificent structure we have attempted to describe. Unacquainted as yet with its internal splendours, he had no difficulty in comprehending them from what he beheld from without. The entrance-gates were open, and a wide archway beyond leading to the great quadrangle, gave him a view of its beautiful marble fountain in the midst, ornamented with exquisite statues of Venus and Cupid. Numerous officers of the household, pages, ushers, and serving-

men in the royal liveries, with now and then some personage of distinction, were continually passing across the Fountain Court. Gaily attired courtiers, in doublets of satin and mantles of velvet, were lounging in the balconies of the presence-chamber, staring at Jocelyn and his companions for want of better occupation. Other young nobles, accompanied by richly-habited dames—some of them the highest-born and loveliest in the land—were promenading to and fro upon the garden terrace on the right, chattering and laughing loudly. There was plenty of life and movement everywhere. Even in the Lord Chamberlain's walk, which, as we have said, was contrived in the upper part of the structure, and formed a sort of external gallery, three persons might be discerned; and to save the reader any speculation, we will tell him that these persons were the Duke of Lennox (Lord Chamberlain), the Conde de Gondomar (the Spanish lieger-ambassador), and the Lord Roos. In front of the great gates were stationed four warders, with the royal badge woven in gold on the front and back of their crimson doublets, with roses in their velvet hats, roses in their buskins, and halberts over their shoulders. Just within the gates stood a gigantic porter, a full head and shoulders taller than the burly warders themselves. From the summit of the lofty central tower of the palace floated the royal banner, discernible by all the country round.

On the other side of the tree against which Jocelyn was leaning, and looking down the long avenue rather than towards the palace, stood Dick Taverner, who, however, bestowed little attention upon his master, being fully occupied by a more attractive object close at hand. Dickon, it appeared, had succeeded in inducing Gillian Greenford to accompany him in the expedition to Theobalds, and, as the fair damsel could not of course go alone, she had cajoled her good-natured old grandsire into conveying her thither; and she was now seated behind him upon a pillion placed on the back of a strong, rough-coated horse. Dick was in raptures at his success. The ride from Tottenham had been delightful. They had tarried for a short time to drink a cup of ale at the Bell at Edmonton, where Dick meant to have breakfasted, though chance had so agreeably prevented him, and where the liquor was highly approved by the old farmer, who became thenceforth exceedingly chatty, and talked of nothing else but good Queen Bess and her frequent visits to Theobalds in the old Lord Burleigh's time, during the rest of the journey. Little heed was paid to his garrulity by the young couple. They let him talk on, feigning to listen, but in reality noting scarce a word he said. As they entered the park of Theobalds, however, they found their tongues, and Gillian became loud in her admiration of the beautiful glades that opened before them, and of the dappled denizens of the wood that tripped lightsomely across the sward, or hurried towards the thickets. The park, indeed,

looked beautiful with its fine oaks in their freshly-opened foliage of the tenderest green, its numerous spreading beeches, its scattered thorns white with blossom, and the young fern just springing from the seed in the brakes. No wonder Gillian was delighted. Dick was equally enchanted, and regretted he was not, like King James, master of a great park, that he might hunt within it at his pleasure. Of course, if he had been king, Gillian would naturally have been his queen, and have hunted with him. Old Greenford, too, admired the scene, and could not but admit that the park was improved, though he uttered something like a groan as he thought that Queen Elizabeth and the Lord Treasurer could be seen in it no longer.

After riding for a couple of miles along a road which led them over beautifully undulating ground, affording glimpses of every variety of forest scenery, sometimes plunging them into the depths of groves, where the path was covered by over-arching trees—sometimes crossing the open chace, studded by single aged oaks of the largest size—sometimes skirting the margin of a pool, fringed with flags, reeds, and bulrushes for the protection of the water-fowl—now passing the large heronry, to the strict preservation of which James attached the utmost importance, they at length approached the long avenue leading to the palace. At its entrance they found Jocelyn waiting for them.

The young man, who cared not for their company, had ridden on in advance. The strange events of the morning gave him plenty of material for reflection, and he longed to commune with himself. Accordingly, when the others stopped at Edmonton, he quitted them, promising to halt till they came up before entering the precincts of the palace. If his ride was not so agreeable as theirs, it at least enabled him to regain, in some degree, his composure of mind, which had been greatly disturbed by his abrupt parting with Aveline. Her image was constantly before him, and, refusing to be dismissed, connected itself with every object he beheld. At first he despaired of meeting her again ; but as he gradually grew calmer, his hopes revived, and difficulties which seemed insuperable began to disperse. By the time Dick Taverner and his companions came up, he felt some disposition to talk, and Gillian's hearty merriment and high spirits helped to enliven him. Having ascertained, from one of the royal keepers whom he had encountered, that the king, with a large company, was out hawking on the banks of the New River, which was cut through the park, and that he would in all probability return through the great avenue to the palace, he proposed that they should station themselves somewhere within it, in order to see him pass. This arrangement pleased all parties ; so, proceeding slowly up the avenue, they took up a position as described.

More than an hour, however, elapsed, and still James, who no doubt was pleased with his sport, came not.

Without being aware of their high quality, or having the slightest notion that the Conde de Gondomar was one of them, Jocelyn had remarked the three personages in the Lord Chamberlain's Walk. He had seen them pause, and apparently look towards the little group of which he himself formed part. Shortly after this, two of the party retired, leaving the third alone in the gallery. By-and-by, these two individuals were seen to cross the Fountain Court, and, passing through the great gates, to direct their steps towards the avenue.

As they approached, Jocelyn recognised one of them as Lord Roos, whom he had seen play so singular a part at Madame Bonaventure's ordinary. The other was wholly unknown to him. But that he was a person of the utmost distinction he felt convinced, as well from his haughty bearing and sumptuous attire as from the evident respect paid him by his companion. In stature he was rather short, being somewhat under the ordinary standard; but his figure was admirably proportioned, and was displayed to the greatest advantage by his rich habiliments. His doublet was of sea-green satin, embroidered with silver and black, with rich open sleeves, and his Spanish cloak was of velvet of the same colour, and similarly embroidered. His hose were of tawny silk, and the plumes in his bonnet black, striped with white. He was decorated with the order of the Golden Fleece, and bore at his side a genuine blade of Toledo, with a handle of rarest workmanship. Round his throat he wore a large triple ruff, edged with pointed lace. His face was oval in shape, his complexion of a rich olive hue, his eyes large, dark, and keen, his features singularly handsome, and his looks penetrating. His hair was raven black, cut short, and removed from the forehead.

Lord Roos and his companion passed close to Jocelyn without appearing to notice him; but they halted before Gillian, regarding her with insolent admiration. Evidently she was the object that had brought them forth. The poor damsel was terribly confused by their ardent glances and libertine scrutiny, and blushed to her very temples. As to Dick Taverner, he trembled with rage and jealousy, and began to repent having brought his treasure into such a dangerous neighbourhood.

The person who seemed to be most struck with Gillian's charms was the wearer of the Spanish mantle.

"*En verdad!*" he exclaimed, "that is the loveliest piece of rusticity I have seen since I came to England. I thought mine eyes did not deceive me, as to her beauty, when I caught sight of her from the Lord Chamberlain's gallery."

"The Conde de Gondomar hath ever an eagle's eye for a pretty woman," Lord Roos replied, laughing.

"The Conde de Gondomar!" mentally ejaculated Jocelyn, who had overheard what he said. "Why, this is he to whom the ring must be shown. The opportunity must not be lost."

Accordingly, regardless of the impropriety of the proceeding, he uncovered his head, and advancing towards the Spaniard, said—

"I believe I have the honour of addressing the Conde de Gondomar?"

"What means this intrusion, sir?" Lord Roos demanded, insolently. "What have you to say to his Excellency?"

"I bring him a token, my lord," the young man replied, exhibiting the ring, given him by the masked horseman, to the ambassador.

"Ha!" exclaimed De Gondomar, glancing at the ring, and then regarding Jocelyn steadfastly, "I must speak with this young man, my lord."

"And abandon the damsel?" demanded Lord Roos.

"No—no—you must take care of her," De Gondomar replied, in a low tone. "Can you not induce Lady Exeter to take her into her service?"

"I will try," Lord Roos replied. "And see!" he added, pointing down the avenue, "the royal party is returning, so I can at once ascertain whether her ladyship will second your Excellency's designs."

"Do so," said De Gondomar, "and I shall be for ever indebted to you. This girl has quite taken my fancy, and I must not lose her. And now, sir," he added, stepping aside with Jocelyn, "you have brought me the token from my assured agent, and I understand from it that you are a person upon whom I may rely."

"In all that beseems a gentleman and a man of honour and loyalty, your Excellency may rely on me," Jocelyn replied.

"I shall require nothing inconsistent with those principles," the Spanish Ambassador said. "This point disposed of, let me know how I can serve you, for I presume you have some request to prefer?"

"Your Excellency can very materially serve me," Jocelyn returned. "I am in danger."

"I thought as much," De Gondomar observed, with a smile. "Since you have placed yourself under my protection, I will do my best to hold you harmless. But who is your enemy?"

"I have two deadly enemies, Sir Giles Mompesson and Sir Francis Mitchell," Jocelyn rejoined.

"I know them well—instruments of Buckingham," said De Gondomar. "They are, indeed, dangerous enemies."

"I have another yet more dangerous," returned Jocelyn. "I have reason to fear that, by boldness of speech, I have incurred the enmity of the Marquis of Buckingham himself."

"Ah! this, indeed, is serious," said De Gondomar.

"I am threatened with arrest by the Star-Chamber," pursued Jocelyn; "so your Excellency will perceive that my position is fraught with extreme peril. Still, I persuade myself, if I could

obtain a hearing of the King, I should be able to set my enemies at defiance and obtain my right."

De Gondomar smiled somewhat scornfully.

"You will obtain little in that way," he said, "and your enemies will crush you effectually. But you must explain to me precisely how you are circumstanced, and I will then consider what can be done for you. And begin by acquainting me with your name and condition, for as yet I am entirely ignorant whom I am addressing."

Upon this Jocelyn succinctly related to the ambassador all such particulars of his history as have been laid before the reader. De Gondomar listened to him with attention, and put some questions to him as he proceeded. At its close his countenance brightened.

"You are in an awkward dilemma, it must be owned, Master Jocelyn Mounchensey," he said. "But I think I can protect you, in spite of them all—in spite of Buckingham himself. Luckily, he is not at Theobalds at present, so the coast is clear for action. The first blow is half the battle. I must present you to the King without delay. And see, his Majesty approaches. Stand close behind me, and act as I advise you by a sign."

CHAPTER XX.

KING JAMES THE FIRST.

Meantime the royal cavalcade came slowly up the avenue. It was very numerous, and all the more brilliant in appearance, since it comprised nearly as many high-born dames as nobles. Amongst the distinguished foreigners who with their attendants swelled the party, were the Venetian lieger-ambassador Giustiniano, and the Marquis de Tremouille, of the family des Ursins, ambassador from France.

These exalted personages rode close behind the King, and one or the other of them was constantly engaged in conversation with him. Giustiniano had one of those dark, grave, handsome countenances familiarized to us by the portraits of Titian and Tintoretto, and even the King's jests failed in making him smile. He was apparelled entirely in black velvet, with a cloak bordered with the costly fur of the black fox. All his followers were similarly attired. The sombre Venetian presented a striking contrast to his vivacious companion, the gay and graceful De Tremouille, who glittered in white satin, embroidered with leaves of silver, while the same colour and the same ornaments were adopted by his retinue.

No order of precedence was observed by the court nobles.

Each rode as he listed. Prince Charles was absent, and so was the supreme favourite, Buckingham; but their places were supplied by some of the chief personages of the realm, including the Earls of Arundel, Pembroke, and Montgomery, the Marquis of Hamilton, and the Lords Haddington, Fenton, and Doncaster. Intermingled with the nobles, the courtiers of lesser rank, and the ambassadors' followers, were the ladies, most of whom claimed attention from personal charms, rich attire, and the grace and skill with which they managed their horses.

Perhaps the most beautiful amongst them was the young Countess of Exeter, whose magnificent black eyes did great execution. The lovely countess was mounted on a fiery Spanish barb, given to her by De Gondomar. Forced into a union with a gouty and decrepit old husband, the Countess of Exeter might have pleaded this circumstance in extenuation of some of her follies. It was undoubtedly an argument employed by her admirers, who, in endeavouring to shake her fidelity to her lord, told her it was an infamy that she should be sacrificed to such an old dotard as he. Whether these arguments prevailed in more cases than one we shall not inquire too nicely; but if court-scandal may be relied on, they did—Buckingham and De Gondomar being both reputed to have been her lovers.

The last, however, in the list, and the one who appeared to be most passionately enamoured of the beautiful countess, and to receive the largest share of her regard, was Lord Roos; and as this culpable attachment and its consequences connect themselves intimately with our history, we have been obliged to advert to them thus particularly. Lord Roos was a near relative of the Earl of Exeter; and although the infirm and gouty old peer had been excessively jealous of his lovely young wife on former occasions, when she had appeared to trifle with his honour, he seemed perfectly easy and unsuspicious now, though there was infinitely more cause for distrust. Possibly he had too much reliance on Lord Roos's good feelings and principles to suspect him.

Very different was Lady Roos's conduct. This unhappy lady, whom we have already mentioned as the daughter of Sir Thomas Lake, Secretary of State, had the misfortune to be sincerely attached to her handsome but profligate husband, whose neglect and frequent irregularities she had pardoned, until the utter estrangement occasioned by his passion for the Countess of Exeter filled her with such trouble, that, overpowered at length by anguish, she complained to her mother, Lady Lake,—an ambitious and imperious woman, whose vanity had prompted her to bring about this unfortunate match. Expressing the greatest indignation at the treatment her daughter had experienced, Lady Lake counselled her to resent it, undertaking herself to open the eyes of the injured Earl of Exeter to his wife's infidelity;

but she was dissuaded from her purpose by Sir Thomas Lake. Though generally governed by his wife, Sir Thomas succeeded, in this instance, in overruling her design of proceeding at once to extremities with the guilty pair, recommending that, in the first instance, Lord Roos should be strongly remonstrated with by Lady Lake and her daughter, when perhaps his fears might be aroused, if his sense of duty could not be awakened.

This final appeal had not yet been made; but an interview had taken place between Lady Roos and her husband, at which, with many passionate entreaties, she had implored him to shake off the thraldom in which he had bound himself, and to return to her, when all should be forgiven and forgotton,—but without effect.

Thus matters stood at present.

As we have seen, though the Countess of Exeter formed one of the chief ornaments of the hawking party, Lord Roos had not joined it; his absence being occasioned by a summons from the Conde de Gondomar, with some of whose political intrigues he was secretly mixed up. Whether the Countess missed him or not, we pretend not to say. All we are able to declare is, she was in high spirits, and seemed in no mood to check the advances of other aspirants to her favour. Her beautiful and expressive features beamed with constant smiles, and her lustrous black eyes seemed to create a flame wherever their beams alighted.

But we must quit this enchantress and her spells, and proceed with the description of the royal party. In the rear of those on horseback walked the falconers, in liveries of green cloth, with bugles hanging from the shoulder; each man having a hawk upon his fist, completely 'tired in its hood, bells, varvels, and jesses. At the heels of the falconers, and accompanied by a throng of varlets in russet jerkins, carrying staves, came two packs of hounds,—one used for what was termed, in the language of falconry, the Flight at the River,—these were all water spaniels; and the other, for the Flight at the Field. Nice music they made, in spite of the efforts of the varlets in russet to keep them quiet.

Hawking, in those days, was what shooting is in the present; fowling-pieces being scarcely used, if at all. Thus the varieties of the hawk tribe were not merely employed in the capture of pheasants, partridges, grouse, rails, quails, and other game, besides water-fowl, but in the chase of hares; and in all of these pursuits the falconers were assisted by dogs. Game, of course, could only be killed at particular seasons of the year; and wild geese, wild ducks, woodcocks, and snipes in the winter; but spring and summer pastime was afforded by the crane, the bustard, the heron, the rook, and the kite; while, at the same periods, some of the smaller description of water-fowl offered excellent sport on lake or river.

A striking and picturesque sight that cavalcade presented, with its nodding plumes of many colours, its glittering silks and velvets, its proud array of horsemen, and its still prouder array of lovely women, whose personal graces and charms baffle description while they invite it. Pleasant were the sounds that accompanied the progress of the train: the jocund laugh, the musical voices of women, the jingling of bridles, the snorting and tramping of steeds, the baying of hounds, the shouts of the varlets, and the winding of horns.

But having, as yet, omitted the principal figure, we must hasten to describe him by whom the party was headed. The King, then, was mounted on a superb milk-white steed, with wide-flowing mane and tail, and of the easiest and gentlest pace. Its colour was set off by its red chanfrein, its nodding crest of red feathers, its broad poitrinal with red tassels, and its saddle with red housings. Though devoted to the chase, as we have shown, James was but an indifferent horseman; and his safety in the saddle was assured by such high-bolstered bows in front and at the back, that it seemed next to impossible he could be shaken out of them. Yet, in spite of all these precautions, accidents had befallen him. On one occasion, Sir Symonds D'Ewes relates that he was thrown headlong into a pond; and on another, we learn from a different source that he was cast over his horse's head into the New River, and narrowly escaped drowing, his boots alone being visible above the ice covering the stream. Moreover the monarch's attire was excessively stiff and cumbrous, and this, while it added to the natural ungainliness of his person, prevented all freedom of movement, especially on horseback. His doublet, which on the present occasion was of green velvet, considerably frayed,—for he was by no means particular about the newness of his apparel,—was padded and quilted so as to be dagger-proof; and his hose were stuffed in the same manner, and preposterously large about the hips. Then his ruff was triple-banded, and so stiffly starched, that the head was fixed immovably amidst its plaits.

Though not handsome, James's features were thoughtful and intelligent, with a gleam of cunning in the eye, and an expression of sarcasm about the mouth, and they contained the type of the peculiar physiognomy that distinguished all his unfortunate line. His beard was of a yellowish-brown, and scantily covered his chin, and his thin moustaches were of a yet lighter hue. His hair was beginning to turn grey, but his complexion was ruddy and hale, proving that, but for his constant ebriety and indulgence in the pleasures of the table, he might have attained a good old age—if, indeed, his life was not unfairly abridged. His large eyes were for ever rolling about, and his tongue was too big for his mouth, causing him to splutter in utterance, besides giving him a disagreeable appearance when eating;

while his legs were so weak, that he required support in walking. Notwithstanding these defects, and his general coarseness of manner, James was not without dignity, and could, when he chose, assume a right royal air and deportment. But these occasions were rare. As is well known, his pedantry and his pretensions to superior wisdom and discrimination procured him the title of the "Scottish Solomon." His general character will be more fully developed as we proceed; and we shall show the perfidy and dissimulation which he practised in carrying out his schemes, and tried to soften down under the plausible appellation of "king-craft."

James was never seen to greater advantage than on occasions like the present. His hearty enjoyment of the sport he was engaged in; his familiarity with all around him, even with the meanest varlets by whom he was attended, and for whom he had generally some droll nickname; his complete abandonment of all the etiquette which either he or his master of the ceremonies observed elsewhere; his good-tempered vanity and boasting about his skill as a woodsman,—all these things created an impression in his favour, which was not diminished in those who were not brought much into contract with him in other ways. When hunting or hawking, James was nothing more than a hearty country gentleman engaged in the like sports.

The cavalcade came leisurely on, for the King proceeded no faster than would allow the falconers to keep easily up with those on horseback. He was in high good humour, and laughed and jested sometimes with one ambassador, sometimes with the other, and having finished a learned discussion on the manner of fleeing a hawk at the river and on the field, as taught by the great French authorities, Martin, Malopin, and Aimé Cassian, with the Marquis de Tremouille, had just begun a similar conversation with Giustiniano as to the Italian mode of manning, hooding, and reclaiming a falcon, as practised by Messer Francesco Sforzino Vicentino, when he caught sight of the Conde de Gondomar, standing where we left him at the side of the avenue, on which he came to a sudden halt, and the whole cavalcade stopped at the same time.

"*Salud! Conde magnifico!*" exclaimed King James, as the Spaniard advanced to make his obeisance to him: "how is it that we find you standing under the shade of the tree friendly to the vine,—*amictæ vitibus ulmi*, as Ovid hath it? Is it that yon blooming Chloe," he continued, leering significantly at Gillian, "hath more attraction for you than our court dames? Troth! the quean is not ill-favoured; but ye ha' lost a gude day's sport, Count, forbye ither losses which we sall na particularize. We hae had a noble flight at the heron, and anither just as guid after the bustard. God's santy! the run the lang-leggit loon gave us. Lady Exeter, on her braw Spanish barb—

we ken whose gift it is—was the only one able to keep with us; and it was her leddyship's ain peregrine falcon that checked the fleeing carle at last. By our faith, the Countess understands the gentle science weel. She cared not to soil her dainty gloves by rewarding her hawk with a *soppa*, as his Excellency Giustiniano would term it, of the bustard's heart, bluid, and brains. But wha hae ye gotten wi' ye?" he added, for the first time noticing Jocelyn.

"A young gentleman in whom I am much interested, and whom I would crave permission to present to your Majesty," replied De Gondomar.

"Saul of our body, Count, the permission is readily granted," replied James, evidently much pleased with the young man's appearance. "Ye shall bring him to us in the privy-chamber before we gang to supper, and moreover ye shall hae full licence to advance what you please in his behoof. He is a weel-grown, weel-favoured laddie, almost as much sae as our ain dear dog Steenie; but we wad say to him, in the words of the Roman bard,—

'O formose puer, nimium ne crede colori!'

Gude pairts are better than gude looks, not that the latter are to be undervalued, but baith should exist in the same person. We shall soon discover whether the young man hath been weel nurtured, and if all correspond, we shall not refuse him the light of our countenance."

"I tender your Majesty thanks for the favour you have conferred upon him," replied De Gondomar.

"But ye have not yet tauld us the youth's name, Count?" said the King.

"Your Majesty, I trust, will not think I make a mystery where none is needed, if I say that my protégé claims your gracious permission to preserve, for the moment, his incognito," De Gondomar replied. "When I present him, of course his name will be declared."

"Be it as you will, Count," James replied. "We ken fu' weel ye hae gude reason for a' ye do. Fail not in your attendance on us at the time appointed."

As De Gondomar, with a profound obeisance, drew back, the King put his steed in motion. General attention having been thus called to Jocelyn, all eyes were turned towards him, his appearance and attire were criticised, and much speculation ensued as to what could be the Spanish Ambassador's motive for undertaking the presentation.

Meanwhile, Lord Roos had taken advantage of the brief halt of the hunting party to approach the Countess of Exeter, and pointing out Gillian to her, inquired in a low tone, and in a few words, to which, however, his looks imparted significance, whether she would take the pretty damsel into her service

as tirewoman or handmaiden. The Countess seemed surprised at the request, and, after glancing at the Beauty of Tottenham, was about to refuse it, when Lord Roos urged in a whisper, "'Tis for De Gondomar I ask the favour."

"In that case I readily assent," the Countess replied. "I will go speak to the damsel at once, if you desire it. How pretty she is! No wonder his inflammable Excellency should be smitten by her." And detaching her barb, as she spoke, from the cavalcade, she moved towards Gillian, accompanied by Lord Roos. The pretty damsel was covered with fresh confusion at the great lady's approach; and was, indeed, so greatly alarmed, that she might have taken to her heels, if she had been on the ground, and not on the pillion behind her grandsire.

"Be not abashed, my pretty maiden," the Countess said, in a kind and encouraging tone; "there is nothing to be afraid of. Aware that I am in want of a damsel like yourself, to tire my hair and attend upon me, Lord Roos has drawn my attention to you; and if I may trust to appearances—as I think I may," she added, with a very flattering and persuasive smile, "in your case, you are the very person to suit me, provided you are willing to enter my service. I am the Countess of Exeter."

"A countess!" exclaimed Gillian. "Do you hear that, grandsire? The beautiful lady is a countess. What an honour it would be to serve her?"

"It might be," the old man replied, with hesitation, and in a whisper; "yet I do not exactly like the manner of it."

"Don't accept the offer, Gillian. Don't go," said Dick Taverner, whose breast was full of uneasiness.

"Your answer, my pretty maiden?" the Countess said, with a winning smile.

"I am much beholden to you, my lady," Gillian replied, "and it will delight me to serve you as you propose—that is, if I have my grandsire's consent to it."

"And the good man, I am sure, has your welfare too much at heart to withhold it," the Countess replied. "But follow me to the palace, and we will confer further upon the matter. Inquire for the Countess of Exeter's apartments." And with another gracious smile, she rejoined the cavalcade, leaving Lord Roos behind. He thanked her with a look for her complaisance.

"O Gillian, I am sure ill will come of this," Dick Traverner exclaimed.

"Wherefore should it?" she rejoined, almost beside herself with delight at the brilliant prospect suddenly opened before her. "My fortune is made."

"You are right, my pretty damsel, it is," Lord Roos remarked. "Fail not to do as the Countess has directed you, and I will answer for the rest."

"You hear what the kind young nobleman says, grandsire?" Gillian whispered in his ear. "You cannot doubt his assurance?"

"I hear it all," old Greenford replied; "but I know not what to think. I suppose we must go to the palace."

"To be sure we must," Gillian cried; "I will go there alone, if you will not go with me."

Satisfied with what he had heard, Lord Roos moved away, nodding approval at Gillian.

The cavalcade, as we have said, was once more in motion, but before it had proceeded far it was again most unexpectedly brought to a halt.

Suddenly stepping from behind a large tree which had concealed him from view, a man in military habiliments, with grizzled hair and beard, and an exceedingly resolute and stern cast of countenance, planted himself directly in the monarch's path, and extending his hand towards him, exclaimed, in a loud voice,

"Stand! O King!"

"Who art thou, fellow? and what wouldst thou?" demanded James, who had checked his horse with such suddenness as almost to throw himself out of his high-bolstered saddle."

"I have a message to deliver to thee from Heaven," replied Hugh Calveley.

"Aha!" exclaimed James, recovering in some degree, for he thought he had a madman to deal with, "What may thy message be?"

And willing to gain a character for courage, though it was wholly foreign to his nature, he motioned those around him to keep back. "Thy message, fellow!" he repeated.

"Hear, then, what Heaven saith to thee," the Puritan replied. "Have I not brought thee out of a land of famine into a land of plenty? Thou oughtest, therefore, to have judged my people righteously! But thou hast perverted justice, and not relieved the oppressed. Therefore, unless thou repent, I will rend thy kingdom from thee, and from thy posterity after thee. Thus saith the Lord, whose messenger I am."

CHAPTER XXI.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE PURITAN'S WARNING.

Coupling Hugh Calveley's present strange appearance and solemn warning with his previous denunciations uttered in secret, and his intimations of some dread design, with which he had sought to connect the young man himself, intimating that its execution would jeopardize his life; putting these things together, we say, Jocelyn could not for an instant doubt that the King was in imminent danger, and he felt called upon to interfere, even though he should be compelled to act against his father's friend and the father of Aveline. No alternative, in fact, was allowed

him. As a loyal subject, his duty imperiously required him to defend his sovereign; and perceiving that no one (in consequence of the King's injunctions) advanced towards the Puritan, Jocelyn hastily quitted the Conde de Gondomar, and, rushing forward, stationed himself between the monarch and his bold admonisher; and so near to the latter, that he could easily prevent any attack being made by him upon James.

Evidently disconcerted by the movement, Hugh Calveley signed to the young man to stand aside, but Jocelyn refused compliance; the rather that he suspected from the manner in which the other placed his hand in his breast that he had some weapon concealed about his person. Casting a look of bitterest reproach at him, which plainly as words said—"Ungrateful boy, thou hast prevented my purpose," the Puritan folded his hands upon his breast with an air of deep disappointment.

"Fly!" cried Jocelyn, in a tone calculated only to reach his ears. "I will defend you with my life. Waste not another moment—fly!"

But Hugh Calveley regarded him with cold disdain, and though he moved not his lips, he seemed to say, "You have destroyed me; and I will not remove the guilt of my destruction from your head."

The Puritan's language and manner had filled James with astonishment and fresh alarm; but feeling secure in the propinquity of Jocelyn to the object of his uneasiness, and being closely environed by his retinue, the foremost of whom had drawn their swords and held themselves in readiness to defend him from the slightest hostile attempt, it was not unnatural that even so timorous a person as he should regain his confidence. Once more, therefore, he restrained by his gestures the angry impetuosity of the nobles around him, who were burning to chastise the rash intruder, and signified his intention of questioning him before any measures were adopted against him.

"Let him be," he cried. "He is some puir demented creature, fitter for Bedlam than anywhere else; and we will see that he be sent thither; but molest him not till we hae spoken wi' him, and certified his condition more fully. Quit not the position ye hae sae judiciously occupied, young sir, albeit against our orders," he cried to Jocelyn. "Dinna draw your blade, unless the fellow seeks to come till us. Not that we are under ony apprehension; but there are bluidthirsty traitors even in our pacific territories, and as this may be ane of them, it is weel not to neglect due precaution. And now, man," he added, raising his voice, and addressing the Puritan, who still maintained a steadfast and unmoved demeanour, with his eye constantly fixed upon his interrogator. "Ye say ye are a messenger frae heaven. An it be sae—whilk we take leave to doubt, rather conceiving ye to be an envoy from the Prince of Darkness than an ambassador from

above—an ill choice hath been made in ye. Unto what order of prophets do ye conceive yourself to belong?"

To this interrogation, propounded in a jeering tone, the Puritan deigned no reply; but an answer was given for him by Archee, the court jester, who had managed in the confusion to creep up to his royal master's side.

"He belongs to the order of Melchisedec," said Archee. A reply that occasioned some laughter among the nobles, in which the King joined heartily.

"Tut, fule! ye are as daft as the puir body before us," cried James. "Ken ye not that Melchisedec was a priest and not a prophet; while to judge frae yon fellow's abulyiements, if he belongs to any church at all, it maun be to the church militant. And yet, aiblins, ye are na sae far out after a'. Like aneuch, he may be infected with the heresy of the Melchisedecians—a pestilent sect, who plagued the early Christian Church sairly, placing their master aboon our Blessed Lord himself, and holding him to be identical wi' the Holy Ghaist. Are ye a Melchisedecian, sirrah?"

"I am a believer in the Gospel," the Puritan replied. "And am willing to seal my faith in it with my blood. I am sent hither to warn thee, O King! and thou wilt do well not to despise my words. Repent ere it be too late. Wonderfully hath thy life been preserved. Dedicate the remainder of thy days to the service of the Most High. Persecute not His people, and revile them not. Purge thy City of its uncleanness and idolatry, and thy Court of its corruption. Profane not the Sabbath——"

"I see how it is," interrupted Archee with a scream; "the man hath been driven stark wud by your Majesty's Book of Sports."

"A book devised by the devil," cried Hugh Calveley, catching at the suggestion; "and which ought to be publicly burnt by the hangman, instead of being read in the churches. How much mischief hath that book done! How many abominations hath it occasioned! And, alas! how much persecution hath it caused; for have not many just men, and sincere preachers of the Word, been prosecuted in thy Court, misnamed of justice, and known, O King! as the Star-Chamber; suffering stripes and imprisonment for refusing to read thy mischievous proclamation to their flocks!"

"I knew it!—I knew it!" screamed Archee, delighted with the effect he had produced. "Take heed, sirrah," he cried to the Puritan, "that ye make not acquaintance wi' 'that Court misnamed of justice' yer ain sell."

"He is liker to be arraigned at our court styled the King's Bench, and hanged, drawn, and quartered afterwards," roared James, far more enraged at the disrespectful mention made of his manifesto, than by anything that had previously occurred. "The man is not sae doited as we supposed him."

"He is not sane enough to keep his neck from the halter," rejoined Archee. "Your Majesty should spare him, since you are indirectly the cause of his malady."

"Intercede not for me," cried Hugh Calveley. "I would not accept any grace at the tyrant's hands. Let him hew me in pieces, and my blood shall cry out for vengeance upon his head."

"By our halidame! a dangerous traitor!" exclaimed James.

"Hear me, O King!" thundered the Puritan. "For the third and last time I lift up my voice to warn thee. Visions have appeared to me in the night, and mysterious voices have whispered in mine ear. They have revealed to me strange and terrible things—but not more strange and terrible than true. They have told me how thy posterity shall suffer for the injustice thou doest to thy people. They have shown me a scaffold which a King shall mount—and a block whereon a royal head shall be laid. But it shall be better for that unfortunate monarch, though he be brought to judgment by his people, than for him who shall be brought to judgment by his God. Yet more. I have seen in my visions two Kings in exile: one of whom shall be recalled, but the other shall die in a foreign land. As to thee, thou mayst live on yet awhile in fancied security. But destruction shall suddenly overtake thee. Thou shalt be stung to death by the serpent thou nourishest in thy bosom."

Whatever credit might be attached to them, the Puritan's prophetic forebodings produced, from the manner in which they were delivered, a strong impression upon all his auditors. Unquestionably the man was in earnest, and spoke like one who believed that a mission had been entrusted to him. No interruption was offered to his speech, even by the King, though the latter turned pale as these terrible coming events were shadowed forth before him.

"His words are awsome," he muttered, "and gar the flesh creep on our banes. Will nane o' ye stap his tongue?"

"Better hae stapt it afore this," said Archee; "he has said ower meikle, or not aneuch. The Deil's malison on thee, fellow, for a prophet of ill! Hast thou aught to allege why his Majesty should not tuck thee up with a halter?"

"I have spoken," responded the Puritan; "let the King do with me what he lists."

"Seize him! arrest him! ye are nearest to him, sir," shouted the King to Jocelyn.

The command could not be disobeyed. As Jocelyn drew near, and laid his hand upon Hugh Calveley, the latter looked reproachfully at him, saying, "Thou doest well, son of my old friend."

Jocelyn was unable to reply, for a crowd now pressed forward on all sides, completely surrounding the prisoner. Some of the

nobles threatened him with their swords, and the warders, who had come up from the gateway, thrust at him with their partisans. Jocelyn had great difficulty in shielding him from the infuriated throng.

"Touch him not!" he cried, clearing a space around them with the point of his sword. "His Majesty has committed him to my custody, and I am responsible for him. Pardon me if I disarm you, sir," he added in an undertone to the prisoner.

"Here is my sword," replied Hugh Calveley, unbuckling his belt and delivering up the weapon it sustained to Jocelyn; "it hath never been dishonoured, and," he added, lowering his voice, "it hath been twice drawn in thy father's defence."

The reproach cut Jocelyn to the heart.

At this moment the crowd drew aside to allow the King's approach.

"Hath he been searched to see whether any deadly or offensive weapon is concealed about him?" demanded James.

"He cannot have any more offensive weapon than his tongue," cried Archee, who accompanied his royal master. "I counsel your Majesty to deprive him of that."

"There is something hidden in his breast," cried one of the warders, searching in his jerkin, and at length drawing forth a short clumsy pistol, or dag, as the weapon was then called. "It is loaded, an please your Majesty," the man continued, after examining it.

Exclamations of horror arose from those around, and Jocelyn had again some difficulty in protecting the prisoner from their fury.

"A dag!" ejaculated James, "a loaded dag, crammed to the muzzle wi' bullets, nae doubt. Haud it down, man! haud it down! it may fire off of itsel', and accomplish the villain's murtherous and sacrilegious design. And sae this was to be the instrument of our destruction! Dost thou confess thy guilt, thou bluidthirsty traitor, or shall the torture force the truth from thee?"

"The torture will force nothing from me," replied Hugh Calveley. "But I tell thee, tyrant, that I would have slain thee, had not my hand been stayed."

"Heard ye ever the like o' that?" exclaimed James, his ruddy cheek blanched with fright, and his voice quavering. "Why, he exceedeth in audacity the arch-traitor Fawkes himsel'. And what stayed thy hand, villain?" he demanded,—"what stayed thy hand, thou bloodthirsty traitor?"

"The presence of this youth, Jocelyn Mounchensey," rejoined Hugh Calveley. "Had he not come between us when he did, and checked my purpose, I had delivered my country from oppression. I told thee, tyrant, thou hadst been marvellously preserved. Thy preserver stands before thee."

"Heaven defend us!" exclaimed James, trembling. "What an escape we hae had. There hath been a special interposition o' Providence in our behoof. Our gratitude is due to Him who watcheth ower us."

"And in some degree to him who hath been made the instrument of your Majesty's preservation," observed the Conde de Gondomar, who formed one of the group near the King. "Since the foul traitor hath proclaimed the name of my young protégé, there can be no need for further concealment. Master Jocelyn Mounchensey hath been singularly fortunate in rendering your Majesty a service, and may for ever congratulate himself on his share—accidental though it be—in this affair."

"By my halidame! he shall have reason for congratulation," cried James, graciously regarding the young man.

"Ay, let him rise by my fall. 'Tis meet he should," cried the Puritan, bitterly. "Shower thy honours upon him, tyrant. Give him wealth and titles. I could not wish him worse misfortune than thy favour."

"Hold thy scurril tongue, villain, or it shall be torn out by the roots," said James. "Thou shalt see that I can as promptly reward those that serve me, as thou shalt presently feel I can severely punish those that seek to injure me. Hark ye, Count!" he added to the Spanish Ambassador, while those around drew back a little, seeing it was his Majesty's pleasure to confer with him in private, "this youth, this Jocelyn Mounchensey, hath gentle bluid in his veins?—he comes of a good stock, eh?"

"He is the representative of an old Norfolk family," De Gondomar replied.

"What! the son of Sir Ferdinando?" demanded James, a shade crossing his countenance, which did not escape the wily ambassador's notice.

"You have guessed right, sire," he said. "This is Sir Ferdinando's son; and, if I may be permitted to say so, your Majesty owes him some reparation for the wrongs done his father."

"How! Count!" exclaimed James, with a look of slight displeasure. "Do you venture to question our judgments on hearsay?—for ye can know naething o' your ain knowledge."

"I know enough to be satisfied that misrepresentations were made to your Majesty respecting this young man's father," De Gondomar replied; "for I am well assured that if you ever erred at all, it must have been through ignorance, and want of due information. This was what I designed to explain more fully than I can well do now, when I availed myself of your Majesty's gracious permission to bring the young man into your presence; and I should then have taken leave to express how much he merited your Majesty's favour and protection. Fortune, however, has outrun my wishes, and given him a stronger claim upon you than any I could urge."

"Ye are right, Count," rejoined James, cautiously. "He hath the strongest claim upon us, and he shall not find us ungrateful. We will confer wi' Steenie—wi' Buckingham, we mean—about him."

"Pardon me, sire," said De Gondomar, "if I venture to suggest that your Majesty hath an admirable opportunity, which I should be sorry to see neglected, of showing your goodness and clemency, and silencing for ever the voice of calumny, which will sometimes be raised against you."

"What mean ye, Count?" cried James. "Ye wad na hae me pardon yon traitor?"

"Most assuredly not, sire," De Gondomar rejoined. "But I would urge some present mark of favour for him who hath saved you from the traitor's fell designs. And I am emboldened to ask this, because I feel assured it must be consonant to your Majesty's own inclinations to grant the request."

"It is sae, Count," rejoined James. "We only desired to consult wi' Buckingham to ascertain whether he had any objections; but as this is altogether unlikely, we will follow our ain inclinations, and do as your Excellency suggests."

De Gondomar could scarcely conceal his satisfaction.

At this moment Lord Roos pressed towards the King.

"I have something to say in reference to this young man, my liege," he cried.

"In his favour?" demanded the King.

"Yes, yes; in his favour, sire," said De Gondomar, looking hard at the young nobleman. "You need not trouble his Majesty further, my lord. He is graciously pleased to accede to our wishes."

"Ay, ay; nae mair need be said," cried James. "Let the young man stand forward."

And as Jocelyn obeyed the injunction which was immediately communicated to him by De Gondomar, the King bade him kneel down, and taking Lord Roos's sword, touched him with it on the shoulder, exclaiming, "Arise! Sir Jocelyn."

"You are safe now," whispered De Gondomar. "This is the first blow, and it has been well struck."

So confused was the new-made knight by the honour thus unexpectedly conferred upon him, that when he rose to his feet he could scarcely command himself sufficiently to make the needful obeisance, and tender thanks to the King. For a moment, his brow was flushed with pride, and his breast beat high; but the emotions were instantly checked, as he thought how the title had been purchased. Looking towards the prisoner, he beheld him in the hands of the warders, to whose custody he had been committed, with his arms bound behind him by thongs. His gaze had never quitted the young man during the ceremony which had just taken place, and he still regarded him sternly and reproachfully.

"Let the prisoner be removed, and kept in a place of safety till our pleasure respecting him be made known," cried James. "And now, my lords and ladies, let us forward to the palace."

And the cavalcade was once more put in motion, and passing through the great gateway entered the Fountain Court, where the nobility of both sexes dismounted, while their attendants and the falconers and varlets passed off to the offices.

The prisoner was conveyed to the porter's lodge, and strictly guarded, till some secure chamber could be prepared for him. On the way thither, Jocelyn contrived to approach him, and to say in a low tone—"Can I do aught for Aveline?"

"Concern not yourself about her, *Sir* Jocelyn," rejoined Hugh Calveley, with stern contempt. "She is in a place of safety. You will never behold her more."

CHAPTER XXII.

WIFE AND MOTHER-IN-LAW.

Quick steps descended the narrow staircase—steps so light and cautious that they made no sound. Before drawing aside the arras that covered the secret entrance to the chamber, the lady paused to listen; and hearing nothing to alarm her, she softly raised a corner of the woof and looked in.

What did she behold? A young man seated beside a carved oak table, with his back towards her. He was reading a letter, the contents of which seemed greatly to disturb him, for he more than once dashed it aside, and then compelled himself to resume its perusal. No one else was in the room, which was spacious and lofty, though somewhat sombre, being wholly furnished with dark oak; while the walls were hung with ancient tapestry. Heavy curtains were drawn before the deep bay windows, increasing the gloom. The chamber was lighted by a brass lamp suspended from the moulded ceiling, the ribs of which were painted, and the bosses, at the intersections, gilded. Near the concealed entrance where the lady stood was placed a large curiously-carved ebony cabinet, against which leaned a suit of tilting armour and a lance; while on its summit were laid a morion, a brigandine, greaves, gauntlets, and other pieces of armour. On the right of the cabinet the tapestry was looped aside, disclosing a short flight of steps, terminated by the door of an ante-chamber.

Almost as the lady set foot within the room, which she did after a brief deliberation, dropping the arras noiselessly behind her, the young man arose. Her entrance had not been perceived, so violently was he agitated. Crushing the letter which had excited him so much between his fingers, and casting it furiously

from him, he gave vent to an incoherent expression of rage. Though naturally extremely handsome, his features at this moment were so distorted by passion that they looked almost hideous. In person he was slight and finely formed; and the richness of his attire proclaimed him of rank.

The lady who, unperceived, had witnessed his violent emotion was remarkably beautiful. Her figure was superb; and she had the whitest neck and arms imaginable, and the smallest and most delicately-formed hands. Her features derived something of haughtiness from a slightly aquiline nose and a short curled upper lip. Her eyes were magnificent,—large, dark, and almost Oriental in shape and splendour. Jetty brows, and thick, lustrous, raven hair, completed the catalogue of her charms. Her dress was of white brocade, over which she wore a loose robe of violet-coloured velvet, with open hanging sleeves, well calculated to display the polished beauty of her arms. Her ruff was of point lace, and round her throat she wore a carcanet of pearls, while other precious stones glistened in her dusky tresses.

This beautiful dame, whose proud lips were now more compressed than usual, and whose dark eyes emitted fierce rays—very different from their customary tender and voluptuous glances—was the Countess of Exeter. He whom she looked upon was Lord Roos, and the chamber she had just entered was the one assigned to the young nobleman in the Palace of Theobalds.

She watched him for some time with curiosity. At length his rage found vent in words.

"Perdition seize them both!" he exclaimed, smiting his forehead with his clenched hand. "Was ever man cursed with wife and mother-in-law like mine! They will, perforce, drive me to desperate measures, which I would willingly avoid; but if nothing else will keep them quiet, the grave must. Ay, the grave!" he repeated in a hollow voice; "it is not my fault if I am compelled to send them thither. Fools, to torment me thus!"

Feeling she had heard more than she ought, the Countess would have retired; but as retreat might have betrayed her, she deemed it better to announce her presence by saying,

"You are not alone, my lord."

Startled by her voice, Lord Roos instantly turned, and regarded her with haggard looks.

"You here, Frances?" he exclaimed; "I did not expect you so soon."

"I came before the hour, because——but you seem greatly agitated. Has anything happened?"

"Little more than what happens daily," he replied. "And yet it is more; for the crisis has arrived, and a fearful crisis it is. O Frances!" he continued, vehemently, "how dear you are to me! To preserve your love I would dare everything, even my soul's welfare. I would hesitate at no crime to keep

possession of it. Let those beware who would force you from me."

"What means this passion, my lord?" inquired the Countess.

"It means, that since there are those who will mar our happiness; who jealous of our loves, will utterly blight and destroy them; who will tear us forcibly asunder, recking little of the anguish they occasion: since we have enemies who will do this; who will mortally wound us—let us no longer hesitate, but strike the first blow. We must rid ourselves of them at any cost, and in any way."

"I will not affect to misunderstand you, my Lord," the Countess replied, her beautiful features beginning to exhibit traces of terror. "But has it arrived at this point? Is the danger imminent and inevitable?"

"Imminent, but not inevitable," Lord Roos rejoined. "It *can* be avoided, as I have hinted, in one way, and in one way only. There is a letter I have just received from my wife; wherein, after her usual upbraidings, remonstrances, and entreaties, she concludes by saying, that if I continue deaf to her prayers, and refuse to break off entirely with you, and return to her, our 'criminal attachment,'—for so she terms our love—should be divulged to the deluded Earl of Exeter, who will know how to redress her wrongs, and avenge his own injured honour. What answer, save one, can be returned to that letter, Frances? If we set her at defiance, as we have hitherto done, she will act, for she is goaded on by that fury, her mother. We must gain a little time, in order that the difficulties now besetting us may be effectually removed."

"I shudder to think of it, William," said the Countess, trembling, and turning deathly pale. "No: it must not be. Rather than such a crime should be committed, I will comply with their demand."

"And leave me!" cried Lord Roos, bitterly. "Frances, your affection is not equal to mine, or you could not entertain such a thought for a moment. You almost make me suspect," he added, sternly, "that you have transferred your love to another. Ah! beware! I am not to be trifled with, like your husband."

"I forgive you the doubt, my lord—unjust though it be—because your mind is disturbed; but were you calm enough to view the matter as it really is, you would perceive that my resolution has nothing in it inconsistent with affection for you; but rather that my very love for you compels me to the step. What *I* propose is best for both of us. The remedy you suggest would work our ruin here and hereafter; would drive us from society, and render us hateful to each other. My soul revolts at it. And though I myself have received a mortal affront from your wife's mother, Lady Lake; though she has poured forth all the malice of which she is capable upon my devoted head; yet I

would rather forgive her—rather sue for pity from her than go the fearful length you propose. No, William. The pang of parting from you will indeed be terrible, but it must be endured. Fate wills it so, and it is therefore useless to struggle against it."

"O, recal those words, Frances!" cried the young nobleman, throwing himself at her feet, and clasping her hands passionately. "Recal them, I implore of you. In uttering them you pronounce my doom—a doom more dreadful than death, which would be light in comparison with losing you. Plunge this sword to my heart!" he exclaimed, plucking the shining weapon from his side, and presenting it to her. "Free me from my misery at once, but do not condemn me to lingering agony."

"Rise, William! rise, I pray of you," ejaculated the Countess, overcome by the intensity of his emotion, "and put up your sword. The love you display for me deserves an adequate return, and it shall meet it. Come what will, I will not leave you. But O! let us not plunge deeper in guilt if it can be avoided."

"But how *can* it be avoided?" cried Lord Roos. "Will *they* listen to our prayers? Will *they* pity us? Will *they* hesitate at our destruction?"

"I know not—I know not," replied the Countess, bewildered; "but I stand appalled before the magnitude of the offence."

"They will *not* spare us," pursued Lord Roos; "and therefore we cannot spare them."

"In my turn I bend to you, William," said the Countess, sinking on her knee before him, and taking his hand. "By the love you bear me, I beseech you not to harm your wife! We have wronged her deeply—let us not have her death to answer for. If the blow *must* fall, let it be upon the mother's head. I have less compassion for her."

"Lady Lake deserves no compassion," replied Lord Roos, raising the Countess, and embracing her tenderly, "for she is the cause of all this mischief. It is to her agency we owe the storm which threatens us with ruin. But things have gone too far now to show compunction for either of them. Our security demands that both should be removed."

"I may now say as you have said, William, and with far greater reason," cried the Countess, "that you love me not, or you would not refuse my request."

"How can I comply with it?" he rejoined. "Nothing were done, if only partly done. Know you the charge that Lady Roos means to bring against you! Though alike false and improbable, it is one to find easy credence with the King; and it has been framed with that view. You will understand this, when I tell you what it is. In this letter," he added, picking up the paper he had thrown down, and unfolding it, "she accuses you of practising sorcery to enslave my affections. She

declares you have bewitched me; and that she has proof of the manner in which it was done, and of the sinful compact you have entered into for the purpose."

"O William! this is false—utterly false!" exclaimed the Countess, in despair.

"I know it," he rejoined. "You have no need to practise other enchantments with me than those you possess by nature. But what I tell you will show you the extent of their malice, and steel your heart, as it hath already steeled mine, against them."

"But this accusation is too monstrous. It will not be believed," cried the Countess.

"Monstrous as it is, it is more likely to be believed—more certain to be maintained—than the other which they lay at our door. We may deny all their assertions; may intimidate or give the lie to the witnesses they may produce against us; may stamp as forgeries your letters, which have unluckily fallen into their hands; but if this charge of witchcraft be once brought against you, it will not fall to the ground. The King will listen to it, because it flatters his prejudices; and even my voice would fail to save you from condemnation—from the stake."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Lady Exeter, spreading her hands before her eyes, as if to exclude some dreadful object. "Oh, to live in an age when such enormities can be perpetrated! when such frightful weapons can be used against the innocent—for I *am* innocent, at least of this offence. All seems against me; all doors of escape—save *one*—closed. And whither does that door lead? To the Bottomless Pit, if there be truth in aught we are told by Heaven."

Lord Roos seemed unable or unwilling to reply; and a deep pause ensued for a few moments, during which the guilty pair shunned each other's regards. It was broken at length by Lady Exeter, who said, reproachfully, "You should have burnt my letters, William. Without them, they would have had no evidence against me. Imprudent that you were, you have destroyed me!"

"Reproach me not, Frances," he rejoined. "I admit my imprudence, and blame myself severely for it. But I could not part from a line I had received from you. I inclosed the letters in a little coffer, which I deposited in a secret drawer of that cabinet, as in a place of perfect safety. The coffer and its contents mysteriously disappeared. How it was purloined I cannot inform you."

"Do your suspicions alight on no one?" she inquired.

"They have fallen on several; but I have no certainty that I have been right in any instance," he replied. "That I have some spy near me, I am well aware; and if I detect him, he shall pay for his perfidy with his life."

"Hist!" cried Lady Exeter. "Did you not hear a noise?"

"No," he rejoined. "Where?"

She pointed to the little passage leading to the ante-chamber. He instantly went thither, and examined the place, but without discovering any listener.

"There is no one," he said, as he returned. "No one, in fact, could have obtained admittance without my knowledge, for my Spanish servant, Diego, in whom I can place full confidence, is stationed without."

"I distrust that man, William," she observed. "When I asked whom you thought had removed the letters, my own suspicions had attached to him."

"I do not think he would have done it," Lord Roos replied. "He has ever served me faithfully; and, besides, I have a guarantee for his fidelity in the possession of a secret on which his own life hangs. I can dispose of him as I please."

"Again that sound!" exclaimed the Countess. "I am sure some one is there."

"Yours ears have deceived you," said the young nobleman, after examining the spot once more, and likewise the secret entrance by which the Countess had approached the chamber. "I heard nothing, and can find nothing. Your nerves are shaken, and make you fanciful."

"It may be so," she rejoined. But it was evident she was not convinced, for she lowered her tones almost to a whisper as she continued. It might be that the question she designed to put was one she dared not ask aloud. "What means do you purpose to employ in the execution of your design?"

"The same as those employed by Somerset and his Countess in the removal of Sir Thomas Overbury; but more expeditious and more certain," he replied under his breath.

"Dreadful!" she exclaimed, with a shudder. "But the same judgment that overtook the Somersets may overtake us. Such crimes are never hidden."

"Crimes fouler than theirs have never been brought to light, and never will. There was one in which Somerset himself was concerned, involving the destruction of a far higher personage than Overbury; and this dare not even be hinted at."

"Because the greatest person in the land was connected with it," returned the Countess. "I conclude you refer to the death of Prince Henry?"

"I do," answered Lord Roos. "Somerset would never have been questioned about Overbury, if his fall had not been resolved upon by the King."

"One other question, and I ask no more," said the Countess, scarcely able to syllable her words. "Who is to administer the deadly draught?"

"Luke Hatton, Lady Lake's apothecary. He is a creature of mine, and entirely devoted to me."

"Our lives will be in his hands ever afterwards," said the Countess, in a deep whisper.

"They will be in safe keeping," he rejoined, endeavouring to reassure her.

"O William! I would I could prevail upon you to defer this project."

"To what end? The sooner it is done the better. It cannot, indeed, be deferred. I shall send for Luke Hatton to-night."

At this announcement, the Countess, who had gradually been growing fainter and becoming paler, lost all power of supporting herself, and, uttering a cry, fell into his outstretched arms in a state of complete insensibility.

While Lord Roos, half distracted, was considering what means he could adopt for her restoration, a man, with an almost tawny complexion, hair and eyes to match, and habited in the young nobleman's livery of crimson and white, suddenly entered from the ante-chamber.

"How dare you come in unsummoned, Diego?" cried Lord Roos, furiously. "Begone instantly, sirrah!"

"I crave your lordship's pardon," replied the Spanish servant; "but I was obliged to apprise you that your wife, the Baroness Roos, and Lady Lake, are without, and will not be denied admission."

"Damnation!" exclaimed Lord Roos. "What brings them here at such an hour? But you must on no account admit them, Diego—at least, till I have had time to remove the Countess to her own chamber. What a cursed mischance!"

Diego instantly withdrew, apparently to obey his lord's command; but he had scarcely entered the little passage when two ladies pushed past him, and made their way into the room. They arrived just in time to intercept Lord Roos, who was conveying his insensible burthen towards the secret staircase.

The young nobleman was as much confounded by their appearance as if two spectres had risen before him. Both ladies were very richly attired, and the younger of the two was by no means destitute of beauty, though of a pale and pensive character. The elder had a full, noble figure, haughty features, now lighted up with a smile of triumph as she gazed on Lord Roos. Very different was the expression of the other, who seemed so much grieved and agitated by what she beheld, as to be almost ready to lapse into the same condition as the Countess.

If Lord Roos could have seen the grin upon Diego's swarthy visage, as he stood at the entrance of the passage leading to the ante-chamber, he would have had little doubt to whom he was indebted for this surprise.

It is needless to say that the ladies who had thus broken upon

Lord Roos's privacy, and obtained full confirmation of their suspicions (if they had any doubts remaining) were his wife and mother-in-law.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TRESS OF HAIR.

How to extricate himself from the dilemma in which he was placed, Lord Roos scarcely knew. But he had a good deal of self-possession, and it did not desert him on the present trying occasion. After such consideration as circumstances permitted, he could discern only one chance of escape, and though well-nigh hopeless, he resolved to adopt it. If consummate audacity could carry him through—and it was required in the present emergency—he had no lack of it.

Hitherto, not a word had passed between him and the intruders on his privacy. Lady Lake seemed to enjoy his confusion too much to do anything to relieve it, and his wife was obliged to regulate her movements by those of her mother. Without breaking the silence, which by this time had become painfully oppressive, he proceeded to deposit the still inanimate person of the Countess of Exeter upon a couch, and, casting a handkerchief, as if undesignedly, over her face, he marched quickly up to the spot were Diego was standing, and said to him, in a deep, determined tone, but so low as not to be overheard by the others:

"You have betrayed me, villain; and unless you obey me unhesitatingly, and corroborate all my assertions, however startling they may appear, you shall pay for your treachery with your life."

This done, he turned towards the two ladies, and with more calmness than might have been expected, addressed himself to Lady Lake:

"You imagine you have made an important discovery, madam," he said—"a discovery which will place me and a noble lady, whose reputation you and your daughter seek to injure, in great perplexity. And you conclude that, being completely (as you fancy) in your power, I shall consent to any terms you and Lady Roos may propose, rather than suffer you to go forth from this chamber and reveal what you have seen in it Is it not so, madam?"

"Ay, my lord," Lady Lake replied, bitterly, "you have stated the matter correctly enough, except in one particular. We do not *imagine* we have made a discovery; because we are quite sure of it. We do not *fancy* you will agree to our terms; because we are certain you will only too gladly screen yourself and the

partner of your guilt from exposure and disgrace, at any sacrifice. And allow me to observe, that the tone adopted by your lordship is neither befitting the circumstances in which you are placed, nor the presence in which you stand. Some sense of shame must at least be left you—some show of respect (if nothing more) ought to be observed towards your injured wife. Were I acting alone in this matter, I would show you and my lady of Exeter no consideration whatever; but I cannot resist the pleadings of my daughter; and for her sake—and *hers* alone—I am content to suspend the blow, unless forced to strike; in which case, nothing shall stay my hands."

"I thank your ladyship for your clemency," said Lord Roos, with mock humility.

"O, my dear lord! do not for ever close the door between us!" cried Lady Roos. "Return to me, and all shall be forgiven."

"Peace, Elizabeth!" exclaimed Lady Lake, impatiently. "Know you not, from sad experience, that your husband is inaccessible to all gentle entreaty? His heart is steeled to pity. Solicit not that which is your right, and which must be conceded, whether he like or not. Let him bend the knee to you. Let him promise amendment, and implore pardon, and it will then be for you to consider whether you will extend forgiveness to him."

Lady Roos looked as if she would fain interrupt her mother, but she was too much under her subjection to offer a remark.

"It is time to undeceive you, madam," said Lord Roos, wholly unmoved by what was said. "I am not in the strait you suppose, and have not the slightest intention of soliciting Lady Roos's pardon, or making any promise to her."

"O mother! you see that even *you* fail to move him," said Lady Roos, tearfully "What is to happen to me?"

"You will make me chide you, daughter, if you exhibit this weakness," cried Lady Lake, angrily. "Let me deal with him. In spite of your affected confidence, my lord, you cannot be blind to the position in which you stand. And though you yourself personally may be careless of the consequences of a refusal of our demands, you cannot, I conceive, be equally indifferent to the fate of the Countess of Exeter, which that refusal will decide."

"I am so little indifferent to the safety of the Countess, madam, that I cannot sufficiently rejoice that she is out of the reach of your malice."

"How, my lord!" exclaimed Lady Lake, astounded at his assurance. "Out of reach, when she is here! You cannot mean," she added, with an undefinable expression of satisfaction, "that she is dead?"

"Dead!" ejaculated Lady Roos; "the Countess dead! I thought she was only in a swoon."

"What riddle is it you would have us read, my lord?" demanded Lady Lake.

"No riddle whatever, madam," replied Lord Roos. "I only mean to assert that the person you behold upon that couch is not the Countess of Exeter."

"Not the Countess!" exclaimed Lady Roos. "Oh, if this were possible! But no, no! I cannot be deceived."

"I now see the reason why her face has been covered with a kerchief," cried Lady Lake. "But it shall not save her from our scrutiny."

So saying, she advanced towards the couch, with the intention of removing the covering, when Lord Roos barred her approach.

"Not a step nearer, madam," he cried, in a peremptory tone. "I will not allow you to gratify your curiosity further. You and Lady Roos may make the most of what you have seen, and proclaim abroad any tale your imaginations may devise forth. You will only render yourselves ridiculous, and encounter derision in lieu of sympathy. No one will credit your assertions, because I shall be able to prove that at this moment Lady Exeter is in a different part of the palace."

"This bold falsehood will not serve your turn, my lord. Whoever she may be, the person on that couch shall be seized, and we shall then ascertain the truth."

And she would have moved towards the door, if Lord Roos had not caught hold of her arm, while at the same time he drew his sword. Thinking from his fierce looks and menacing gestures that her mother might be sacrificed to his fury, Lady Roos fell on her knees before him, imploring pity; and she continued in this supplicating posture till Lady Lake angrily bade her rise.

"You have come here without my permission, madam," Lord Roos cried furiously to his mother-in-law, "and you shall not depart until I choose. Secure the door, Diego, and bring me the key! It is well," he continued, as the injunction was obeyed.

Lady Lake submitted without resistance to the constraint imposed upon her. She could not well do otherwise; for though her screams would have brought aid, it might have arrived too late. And, after all, she did not intend to settle matters in this way. But she betrayed no symptoms of fear, and, as we have stated, ordered her daughter to discontinue her supplications.

"And now, madam," said Lord Roos, releasing Lady Lake, as he took the key from Diego, "I will tell you who that person is," pointing to the couch.

"Add not to the number of falsehoods you have already told,

my lord" rejoined Lady Lake, contemptuously. "I am perfectly aware who she is."

"But I would fain hear his explanation, mother," said Lady Roos.

"What explanation can be offered?" cried Lady Lake. "Do you doubt the evidence of your senses?"

"I know not what I doubt, or what I believe!" exclaimed Lady Roos, distractedly.

"Then believe what I tell you, Bess," said her husband. "This is the Countess's handmaiden, Gillian Greenford."

"An impudent lie!" cried Lady Lake.

"A truth, my lady," interposed Diego. "A truth to which I am ready to swear."

"No doubt of it, thou false knave and double traitor! thou art worthy of thy lord. There is no lie, however absurd and improbable, which he can invent, that thou wilt not support. Thou art ready now to perjure thyself for him; but let him place little reliance on thee, for thou wilt do the same thing for us to-morrow."

"I scarcely think it probable, my lady," Diego replied, bowing.

Lady Lake turned from him in supreme disgust.

"Admitting for a moment the possibility of your lordship's assertion being correct," said Lady Roos, "how comes Gillian Greenford (for so methinks you name her) in her mistress's attire?"

"'Tis easily explained, chuck," Lord Roos rejoined. "Anxious, no doubt, to set herself off to advantage, she hath made free with the Countess's wardrobe. Your own favourite attendant, Sarah Swarton, hath often arrayed herself in your finest fardingales, kirtlets, and busk-points, as Diego will tell you. Is it not so, rascal?"

"'Tis precisely as my lord hath stated, my lady," said the Spaniard to Lady Roos. "When Sarah Swarton hath been so habited, I have more than once mistaken her for your ladyship."

"Yet Sarah is very unlike me," said Lady Roos.

"That only shows how deceptive appearances are, chuck, and how little we ought to trust to them," observed Lord Roos.

"How can you suffer yourself to be thus duped, Elizabeth?" said Lady Lake.

"Because her ladyship would rather believe me than you, madam," rejoined Lord Roos. "But she is *not* duped."

"Heaven forgive him!" exclaimed Diego, aside.

"And supposing it were Gillian, how would the case be mended, as far as you are concerned, Elizabeth?" said Lady Lake. "Are you not as much injured by one as by the other?"

"It may be," replied her daughter, "but I am jealous only of the Countess. I would kneel to any other woman, and thank her, who would tear my husband from her embraces!"

"Weak fool! I disown you," exclaimed Lady Lake, angrily.

"What a wife!" cried Diego, apart. "His lordship is quite unworthy of her. Now, I should appreciate such devotion."

At this juncture there was a slight movement on the part of Lady Exeter, and something like a sigh escaped her.

"She revives!" whispered Lady Lake to her daughter. "We shall soon learn the truth. I will find a means to make her speak. Well, my lord," she added aloud, and speaking in a sarcastic tone, "if you will have it so, it is idle to dispute it. But what will the Countess say, when she discovers your infidelity?"

On this a brisker movement took place on the couch, and a hand was raised as if to snatch away the kerchief.

"We have her," whispered Lady Lake, triumphantly, to her daughter. "Surely," she proceeded aloud, "the Countess will deeply resent the transfer of your affections to her handmaiden."

Lord Roos saw the peril in which he stood. A moment more, and Lady Lake had gained her point, and the Countess betrayed herself.

"Lady Exeter will place little reliance on any representations you may make, madam," he said, giving particular significance to his words, "except so far as they concern herself, and then she will take care to refute them. As to the circumstance of Gillian Greenford visiting me, fainting in my arms (from excess of timidity, poor girl!) and being discovered by you and Lady Roos in that position, the Countess will laugh at it when it comes to her knowledge—as why should she do otherwise? But she will feel very differently when she finds that you and your daughter insist that it was she herself, and not her handmaiden, whom you beheld. Rely on it, madam, Lady Exeter will contradict that assertion, and disprove it."

"Let it be disproved now. Let the person on that couch disclose her features, and we shall then see whether she be the Countess or Gillian."

"Ay, let her do that, my lord,—let her speak to us," urged Lady Roos.

"*Diablo!* how is this request to be complied with, I marvel?" said Diego, apart.

But Lord Roos was too experienced a player to be defeated by this turn in the game.

"Gillian has already been sufficiently annoyed," he cried, "and shall not submit to this ordeal. Besides, she has relapsed into insensibility, as you see."

"She does what your lordship wills her, it is clear," said Lady Lake, contemptuously. "We know what construction to put upon your refusal."

"I care not what construction you put upon it," cried Lord Roos, losing patience. "You and Lady Roos may think what you please, and act as you please. Enough for me that you can prove nothing."

"Why, this is more like yourself, my lord," retorted Lady Lake, derisively. "Having thrown aside the mask, you will be spared the necessity of further subterfuge. The Countess, doubtless, will imitate your example, lay aside her feigned insensibility, and defy us. She need be under no apprehension, since she has your own warrant that we can prove nothing."

"Your purpose, I perceive, is to irritate me, madam," cried Lord Roos, fiercely; "and so far you are likely to succeed, though you fail in all else. I have no mask to throw off; but if you will have me declare myself your enemy, I am ready to do so. Henceforth, let there be no terms kept between us—let it be open warfare."

"Be it so, my lord. And you will soon find who will be worsted in the struggle."

"Oh, do not proceed to these fearful extremities, dear mother, and dearest husband!" cried Lady Roos, turning from one to the other, imploringly. "Cease these provocations, I pray of you. Be friends, and not enemies."

"As you please—peace or war; it is the same to me," said Lord Roos. "Meantime, I am wearied of this scene, and must put an end to it. Diego!" And beckoning his servant to him, he whispered some directions in his ear.

"My lord shall be obeyed," said Diego, as he received his commission. "Gillian shall be conveyed with all care to her chamber."

"We must have some proof that she has been here," thought Lady Lake. "But how to obtain it? I have it. Take these," she added, in a whisper to her daughter, and giving a pair of scissors, "and contrive, if possible, to sever a lock of her hair before she be removed."

By a look, Lady Roos promised compliance.

While this was passing, Diego had approached the couch; and fastening the kerchief securely round the Countess's face, he raised her in his arms, and moved towards the secret staircase, the tapestried covering of which was held aside by Lord Roos, to give him passage.

Rapidly as the Spaniard moved, he did not outstrip Lady Roos, whose design being favoured by the escape from its confinement of one of the Countess's long dark tresses, she had no difficulty of possessing herself of it in the manner prescribed by her mother. Lady Exeter was aware of the loss she had sustained, and uttered a stifled cry; but this was attributed to the fright natural to the occasion by Lord Roos, who had not noticed what had taken place, and only caused him to hurry Diego's departure. But before the latter had wholly disappeared with his burthen, the

perfumed and silken tress of hair was delivered to Lady Lake, who muttered triumphantly as she received it—"This will convict her. She cannot escape us now."

The prize was scarcely concealed when Lord Roos, sheathing the sword which he had hitherto held drawn, advanced towards his mother-in-law.

"Now that the object of your disquietude is removed, madam, it will not be necessary to prolong this interview," he said.

"Have we then your lordship's permission to depart?" rejoined Lady Lake, coldly. "We are not, I presume, to avail ourselves of the private means of exit contrived for your amorous adventures, lest we should make other discoveries."

"Your ladyship will leave by the way you entered," rejoined Lord Roos. "I will attend you to the door—and unfasten it for you."

"Before we go, I would have a word with my husband—it may be my last," said Lady Roos to her mother. "I pray you withdraw a little, that we may be alone."

"Better not," rejoined Lady Lake. But unable to resist her daughter's imploring looks, she added, "Well, as you will. But it is useless."

With this she proceeded to the little passage, and remained there.

As Lady Roos turned to her husband, she saw, from the stern and inflexible look he had assumed, that any appeal made to him would be unavailing, and she attempted none. A moment elapsed before she could utter a word, and then it was only a murmur to Heaven for guidance and support.

"What say you, Elizabeth?" demanded Lord Roos, thinking she had addressed him.

"I asked for support from on high, William, and it has been accorded to me," she replied, in a low, sweet voice. "I can now speak to you. It is not to weary you with supplications or reproaches that I thus detain you. I have something to impart to you, and I am sure you will eagerly listen to it. Come nearer, that we may not be overheard."

Lord Roos, whose curiosity was aroused by her manner, obeyed her.

"I am all attention," he said.

"I feel I am in your way, William," she rejoined, in a deep whisper; "and that you desire my death. Nay, interrupt me not; I am sure you desire it; and I am equally sure that the desire will be gratified, and that you will kill me."

"Kill you, Bess!" cried Lord Roos, startled. "How can you imagine aught so frightful?"

"There is a power granted to those who love deeply as I do, of seeing into the hearts of those they love, and reading their secrets. I have read yours, William. Nay, be not alarmed. I

have kept it to myself hitherto, and will keep it to the end. You wish me dead, I say: and you shall have your wish—but not in the way you propose. Having lost your love, I am become indifferent to life—or, rather, life is grown intolerable to me. But though death may be a release, it must not come from your hand."

"You cannot mean to destroy yourself, Elizabeth?" cried Lord Roos, appalled.

"I mean to trouble you no longer. I mean to make the last and greatest sacrifice I can for you; and to save you from a crime —or, if you must share the crime, at least to screen you from punishment. Look here!" she added, producing a small phial. "Bid me drink of this, and ere to-morrow you are free, and I am at rest. Shall I do it?"

"No—no," rejoined Lord Roos, snatching the phial from her. "Live, Bess, live!"

"Am I to live for you, William?" she cried, with inexpressible joy.

He made no answer, but averted his head.

"In mercy, give me back the phial!" she exclaimed, again plunged into the depths of despair.

"I must refuse your request," he replied.

"Have you done, Elizabeth?" demanded Lady Lake, coming forth from the passage.

"A moment more, mother," cried Lady Roos. "One word—one look!" she added, to her husband.

But he neither spoke to her, nor regarded her.

"I am ready to accompany you now, mother," said the poor lady, faintly.

"Nerve yourself, weak-hearted girl," said Lady Lake, in a low tone. "Revenge is ours."

"If I could only strike her without injuring him, I should not heed," thought Lady Roos. "But where he suffers, I must also suffer, and yet more acutely."

And scarcely able to support herself, she followed her mother to the door of the ante-chamber, which was unlocked, and thrown open for them by her husband. He did not bid her farewell.

As Lady Lake passed forth, she paused for a moment, and said—

"To-morrow, my lord, we will ascertain whether the tress of hair we have obtained from the fair visitant to your chamber matches with that of Gillian Greenford or with the raven locks of the Countess of Exeter."

And satisfied with the effect produced by this menace, she departed with her daughter before Lord Roos could utter a reply.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FOUNTAIN COURT.

On the morning after the eventful passage in his life previously related, our newly-created knight was standing, in a pensive attitude, beside the beautiful fountain, adorned with two fair statues, representing the Queen of Love and her son, heretofore described as placed in the centre of the great quadrangle of the Palace of Theobalds. Sir Jocelyn was listening to the plashing of the sparkling jets of water, as they rose into the air and fell back into the broad marble basin, and appeared to be soothed by the pleasant sound. His breast had been agitated by various and conflicting emotions. In an incredibly short space of time events had occurred, some of which seemed likely to influence the whole of his future career; while one of them, though it had advanced him far beyond what he could have anticipated, appeared likely to mar altogether his prospects of happiness.

Though the difficulties, therefore, that surrounded him had been unexpectedly overcome; though, by the exertions of the Conde de Gondomar, who had followed up his first success with wonderful promptitude and perseverance, and had dexterously contrived, by all the insidious arts of which he was so perfect a master, to ingratiate his protégé still further with the King, without the protégé himself being aware of the manner in which he was served; though James himself appeared greatly pleased with him at the banquet in the evening, to which, owing to the skilful management of the Spanish ambassador, he was invited, and bestowed such marked attention upon him that the envy and jealousy of most of the courtiers were excited by it; though he seemed on the high-road to still greater favour, and was already looked upon as a rising favourite, who might speedily supplant others above him in this ever-changing sphere, if he did not receive a check; though his present position was thus comparatively secure, and his prospects thus brilliant, he felt ill at ease and deeply dissatisfied with himself. He could not acquit himself of blame for the part he had played, though involuntarily, in the arrest of Hugh Calveley. It was inexpressibly painful to him; and he felt it as a reproach from which he could not free himself, to have risen, however unexpectedly on his own part, by the unfortunate Puritan's fall. How could he ever face Aveline again? She must regard him with horror and detestation, as the involuntary cause of her father's destruction. A bar had been placed between them, which nothing could ever remove. And though, on the one hand, he was suddenly exalted far beyond his hopes, yet, on the other, he was as suddenly cast down, and threatened to be for ever deprived of the bliss he had in view, the possession of which he coveted far more than wealth or

grandeur. Additional complexity had been given to his position from the circumstance that, at De Gondomar's secret instance, of which, like all the rest, he was unaware, he had been appointed as officer in custody of Hugh Calveley, until the latter, who was still detained a close prisoner in the porter's lodge, should be removed to the Tower, or the Fleet, as his Majesty might direct. This post he would have declined, had there been a possibility of doing so. Any plan he might have formed of aiding the prisoner's escape was thus effectually prevented, as he could not violate his duty; and it was probably with this view that the wily ambassador had obtained him the appointment. In fact, he had unconsciously become little more than a puppet in the hands of the plotting Spaniard, who pulled the strings that moved him at pleasure, regardless of the consequences. What De Gondomar's ulterior designs were with him, had not yet become manifest.

These perplexing thoughts swept through Sir Jocelyn's breast, as he stood by the marble fountain, and listened to the sound of its falling waters.

While thus occupied, he perceived two persons issue from the arched entrance fronting the gate (adjoining the porter's lodge, in which the prisoner was still detained), and make their way slowly across the quadrangle, in the direction of the cloister on its eastern side, above which were apartments assigned to the Secretary of State, Sir Thomas Lake.

The foremost of the two was merely a yeoman of the guard, and would not for a moment have attracted Sir Jocelyn's attention, if it had not been for a female who accompanied him, and whom he was evidently conducting to Sir Thomas Lake's rooms, as Sir Jocelyn not only saw the man point towards them, but heard him mention the Secretary of State's name.

Something whispered him that this closely-hooded female—the lower part of whose face was shrouded in a muffler, so that the eyes alone were visible—was Aveline. Little could be discerned of the features; but the exquisitely-proportioned figure, so simply yet so tastefully arrayed, could only be hers; and if he *could* have doubted that it was Aveline, the suddenness with which her looks were averted as she beheld him, and the quickness with which she stepped forward, so as even to outstrip her companion—these circumstances, coupled with the violent throbbing of his own heart, convinced him he was right. He would have flown after her, if he had dared; would have poured forth all his passionate feelings to her, had he been permitted; would have offered her his life, to deal with as she pleased; but his fears restrained him, and he remained rivetted to the spot, gazing after her until she entered the great hall on the ground floor, beneath the Secretary of State's apartments. Why she sought Sir Thomas Lake he could easily understand. It was only from him that authority to visit her father could be obtained.

After remaining irresolute for a few minutes, during which the magnificent structure around him faded entirely from his view like a vision melting into air, and he heard no more the pleasant plashing of the fountain, he proceeded to the great hall near the cloister, resolved to wait there till her return.

CHAPTER XXV.

SIR THOMAS LAKE.

A GRAVE-LOOKING man, of a melancholy and severe aspect, and attired in a loose robe of black velvet, was seated alone in a chamber, the windows of which opened upon the Fountain Court, which we have just quitted. He wore a silken skull-cap, from beneath which a few grey hairs escaped; his brow was furrowed with innumerable wrinkles, occasioned as much by thought and care as by age; his pointed beard and moustaches were almost white, contrasting strikingly with his dark, jaundiced complexion, the result of an atrabilarious temperament; his person was extremely attenuated, and his hands thin and bony. He had once been tall, but latterly had lost much of his height, in consequence of a curvature of the spine, which bowed down his head almost upon his breast, and fixed it immovably in that position. His features were good, but, as we have stated, were stamped with melancholy, and sharpened by severity.

This person was Sir Thomas Lake, Secretary of State.

The table at which he sat was strewn over with official documents and papers. He was not, however, examining any of them, but had just broken the seal of a private packet which he had received from his wife, when an usher entered, and intimated that a young maiden, who was without, solicited a moment's audience. The request would have been refused, if the man had not gone on to say that he believed the applicant was the daughter of the crazy Puritan who had threatened the King's life on the previous day. On hearing this, Sir Thomas consented to see her, and she was admitted accordingly.

As soon as the usher had retired, Aveline unmuffled herself, and, cold and apathetic as he was, Sir Thomas could not help being struck by her surpassing beauty, unimpaired even by the affliction under which she laboured; and he consequently softened in some degree the customary asperity of his tones in addressing her.

"Who are you, maiden, and what seek you?" he demanded, eyeing her with curiosity.

"I am daughter to the unfortunate Hugh Calveley, now a prisoner in the palace," she replied.

"I am sorry to hear it," rejoined Sir Thomas, resuming his habitually severe expression; "for you are the daughter of a very heinous offender. The enormity of Hugh Calveley's crime, which is worse than parricide, deprives him of all human sympathy and compassion. In coming to me you do not, I presume, intend to weary me with prayers for mercy; for none is deserved, and none will be shown. For my own part, I shall not utter a word in mitigation of the dreadful sentence certain to be pronounced upon him; nor shall I advise the slightest clemency to be shown him on the part of his Majesty. Such an offender cannot be too severely punished. I do not say this," he continued, somewhat softening his harshness, "to aggravate the distress and shame you naturally feel; but I wish to check at once any hopes you may have formed. Yet, though I have no pity for him, I have much for you, since, doubtless, you are innocent of all knowledge of your father's atrocious design—happily prevented. And I would therefore say to you, shut out all feelings for him from your heart. The man who raises his hand against his Sovereign cuts off by the act all ties of kindred and love. Affection is changed to abhorrence; and such detestation does his horrible offence inspire, that those of his own blood are bound to shun him, lest he derive comfort and consolation from their presence. Thus considered, you are no longer his daughter, for he has himself severed the links between you. You no longer owe him filial duty and regard, for to such he is no more entitled. Leave him to his fate; and, if possible, for ever obliterate his memory from your breast."

"You counsel what I can never perform, honourable sir," replied Aveline; "and were he even branded like Cain, I could not shut my heart towards him. Nothing can make me forget that I am his daughter. That his offence will be dreadfully expiated, I do not doubt; but if I can alleviate his sufferings in any way, I will do so; and I will never cease to plead for mercy for him. And O, honourable sir! you regard his offene in a darker light than it deserves. You treat him as if he had actually accomplished the direful purpose attributed to him; whereas nothing has been proven against him beyond the possession of a weapon, which he might keep about his person for self-defence."

"The plea you urge is futile, maiden," rejoined Sir Thomas; "he is judged out of his own mouth, for his own lips have avowed his criminal intentions."

"Still it was but the intention, honourable sir!"

"In such cases, the intention is equal to the crime—at least in the eyes of law and justice. No plea will save Hugh Calveley. Of that rest assured."

"One plea may be urged for him, which, whether it avail or not, is the truth, and shall be made. It is painful to speak of my

father as I must now do; but there is no help for it. Of late years he has been subject to strange mental hallucinations, which have bordered close upon madness, if they have not reached that terrible point. Nocturnal vigils, fastings, and prayers, have affected his health. He has denied himself sufficient rest, and has only partaken of food barely sufficient to sustain nature, and no more. The consequence has been, that strange fancies have troubled his brain; that at dead of night, when alone in his chamber, he has imagined that visions have appeared to him; that voices have spoken—awful voices—talking of prophecies, lamentations and judgments, and charging him with a mighty and terrible mission. All these things I have heard from his own lips, and I have heard and seen much more, which has satisfied me that his intellects are disordered, and that he cannot be held accountable for his actions."

"If such be the case, he should have been kept under restraint, and not suffered to go abroad," said Sir Thomas. "Such madmen are highly mischievous and dangerous. Much blame rests with you, maiden."

"The whole blame is mine!" she exclaimed; "I confess my error—my crime—and will atone for it willingly with my life, provided he be spared. If a sacrifice must be made, let me be the victim."

"There is no sacrifice, and no victim," returned Sir Thomas, gravely, though he was not unmoved by her filial devotion. "There is an offender, and there will be justice; and justice must be satisfied. Inexorable as fate, her dread sentences cannot be averted."

"O, honourable sir! you may one day recal those words; for which of us can hold himself free from offence? My father is not guilty in the eyes of Heaven; or if he be, I am equally culpable, since I ought to have prevented the commission of the crime. O, I shall never forgive myself that I did not follow him when he parted from me yesterday!"

"Let me hear how that occurred, maiden?" asked Sir Thomas.

"It chanced in this way, sir. I have already described my father's state of mind, and the distempered view he has been accustomed to take of all things. Yesterday, May-day sports were held in the village of Tottenham, where we dwelt; and as such things are an abomination in his sight, he took upon him to reprove the actors in the pastimes. They who witnessed his conduct on that occasion would hardly hold him to be under the due control of reason. Amongst the spectators was the son of an old friend, whose name having accidentally reached my father, he invited him into the house, and a misunderstanding having arisen between them, the latter suddenly left—dismissed almost with rudeness. On his departure, my father was greatly disturbed—more so than I have ever seen him. After awhile, he

withdrew to his own chamber, as was his habit, to pray, and I hoped would become tranquillized; but the very reverse happened, for when he reappeared, I saw at once that a fearful change had taken place in him. His eye blazed with preternatural light, his gestures were wild and alarming, and his language full of menace and denunciation. He again spoke of his mission from Heaven, and said that its execution could no longer be delayed."

"This should have been a warning to you," observed Sir Thomas, knitting his brows.

"It should, honourable sir. But I did not profit by it. I knew and felt that he was no longer under the dominion of reason—that he was labouring under some terrible delusion that approached its crisis; but I did not check him. I yielded passive obedience to his injunction that I should depart instantly with an old servant to London; and I agreed to tarry at a house which he mentioned till I heard from him. I had sad forebodings that I should never hear from him again—or if I *did*, that the tidings would be worse than none at all; but I obeyed. I could not, indeed, resist his will. I set forth with my attendant, and my father parted with us at the door. He placed money in my hand, and bade me farewell! but in such a tone, and with such a look, that I felt his senses were gone, and I would have stayed him, but it was then too late. Breaking from my embrace, he sprang upon his horse, which was ready saddled, and rode off, taking the direction of Edmonton; while I, with a heart full of distress and misgiving, pursued my way to London. Ere midnight, my sad presentiments were verified. A messenger traced me out, bringing intelligence of the direful event that had happened, and informing me that my father was a prisoner at Theobalds. As soon as I could procure means of reaching the palace, I set forth, and arrived here about an hour ago, when, failing in my efforts to obtain an interview with my father, who is closely confined, and none suffered to come near him save with authority from the Secretary of State, I sought an audience of you, honourable sir, in the hope that you would grant me permission to see him."

"If I do grant it, the interview must take place in the presence of the officer to whom his custody has been committed," replied Sir Thomas. "With this restriction, I am willing to sign an order for you."

"Be it as you please, honourable sir; and take my heartfelt gratitude for the grace."

Sir Thomas struck a small bell upon the table, and the usher appeared at the summons.

"Bid the officer in charge of Hugh Calveley attend me," he said.

The man bowed, and departed.

Sir Thomas Lake then turned to the paper which he had just opened before Aveline's appearance, and was soon so much engrossed by it that he seemed quite unconscious of her presence. His countenance became gloomier and more austere as he read on, and an expression of pain—almost a groan—escaped him. He appeared then to feel sensible that he had committed an indiscretion, for he laid down the paper, and, as if forcibly diverting himself from its contents, addressed Aveline.

"What you have said respecting your father's condition of mind," he observed, "by no means convinces me that it is so unsound as to render him irresponsible for his actions. It were to put a charitable construction upon his conduct to say that no one but a madman could be capable of it; but there was too much consistency in what he has said and done to admit of such an inference. But for the interposition of another person he owned that he would have killed the King; and the disappointment he exhibited, and the language he used, prove such to have been his fixed intention. His mind may have been disturbed; but what of that? All who meditate great crimes, it is to be hoped, are not entirely masters of themselves. Yet for that reason they are not to be exempt from punishment. He who is sane enough to conceive an act of wickedness, to plan its execution, and to attempt to perpetrate it, although he may be in other respects of unsettled mind, is equally amenable to the law, and ought equally to suffer for his criminality with him who has a wiser and sounder head upon his shoulders."

Aveline attempted no reply, but the tears sprang to her eyes.

At this moment the door was thrown open by the usher to admit Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey.

The emotion displayed by the young couple when thus brought together passed unnoticed by the Secretary of State, as he was occupied at the moment in writing the authority for Aveline, and did not raise his eyes towards them.

"Are you the officer to whom my father's custody has been entrusted?" exclaimed Aveline, as soon as she could give utterance to her surprise.

"Why do you ask that question, mistress?" demanded Sir Thomas, looking up. "What can it signify to you who hath custody of your father, provided good care be taken of him? There is a Latin maxim which his Majesty cited at the banquet last night—*Etiam aconito inest remedium*—and which may be freely rendered by our homely saying, that 'It is an ill wind that bloweth nobody good luck;' and this hath proved true with Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey—for the gust that hath wrecked your father hath driven him into port, where he now rides securely in the sunshine of the King's favour. Nor is this to be wondered at, since it was by Sir Jocelyn that his Majesty's life was preserved."

"The King preserved by him!" exclaimed Aveline, in bewilderment.

"Ay, marry and indeed, young mistress," rejoined Sir Thomas. "He arrested the fell traitor; was knighted on the spot for the service by the King; was invited afterwards to the grand banquet in the evening, and received with more distinction than any other guest; and he is now, as you find, entrusted with the custody of the prisoner. Thus, if your father has done little good to himself, he hath done much to Sir Jocelyn."

Aveline could not repress an exclamation of anguish.

"No more of this, I entreat, Sir Thomas," cried Sir Jocelyn.

"It is right she should hear the truth," replied the Secretary of State. "Here is her authority for admittance to her father," he continued, giving it to him. "It must take place in your presence, Sir Jocelyn. And you will pay strict attention to what they say," he added, in a low tone, "for you will have to report all that passes between them to the council. Something may arise to implicate the girl herself, so let nought escape you. Be vigilant in your office, as is needful. I mention this as you are new to it. If the prisoner continues obstinate, as he hath hitherto shown himself, threaten him with the torture. The rack will certainly be applied when he reaches the Tower. I need not give you further instructions, I think, Sir Jocelyn. Be pleased to return to me when the interview is over."

Upon this, he bowed gravely, and sounded the bell for the usher. Unable to offer any remonstrance, Sir Jocelyn approached Aveline, who could scarcely support herself, with the intention of offering her assistance; but she shrank from him, and again muffling her face, went forth, while he slowly followed her.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FORGED CONFESSION.

Some little time had elapsed since Aveline's departure on her sorrowful errand, and Sir Thomas Lake was still alone, and once more deeply engrossed in the consideration of the document, which, it will be recollected, had occasioned him so much disquietude; and the feeling by no means diminished when the usher entered and announced Lady Lake. Severe and inflexible as we have described him, the Secretary of State was generally yielding enough towards his lady, of whom he stood in great awe, and whom he treated with the utmost deference; but on this occasion, contrary to habitude, he received her very coldly, and without rising, motioned her to a seat beside him. Disregarding the want of attention, which, under other circumstances, she would have resented, Lady Lake took the seat indicated

without remark, and continued silent till the usher had retired. Then turning quickly towards her husband, and fixing an inquiring look upon him, she said, in a low voice—

"What think you of this document, Sir Thomas?"

"This forgery?" he rejoined, in the same tone, but without raising his eyes towards her.

"Ay, this forgery, if you choose to call it so," she returned. "Let me have your opinion upon it. Is it as it should be? Are its expressions such as would be used by a guilty woman, like the Countess, imploring pity, and seeking to shield herself from disgrace? Do you find fault with it? Can it be amended in any particular?"

"I find such grave fault with it," replied the Secretary of State, still without looking up, "that I would amend it by casting it into the flames. Lady Lake, it is my duty to warn you. This is a fearful crime you would commit, and severely punishable by the law. You may excuse it to yourself, because you have an end in view which seems to justify the means; but the excuse will not avail you with others. You have said that in a conflict with one so cunning and unscrupulous as our noble son-in-law, you are compelled to fight him with his own weapons—to meet trick with trick, manœuvre with manœuvre; but take my word for it, you would more easily defeat him by straightforward means. Be ruled by me in this one instance. Abandon a scheme which must inevitably lead to consequences I shudder to contemplate; and let this fabricated confession be destroyed."

"Give it me," she cried, snatching the paper from him. "You were ever timid, Sir Thomas; and if you had not lacked courage, this expedient would not have been necessary. Odious and dangerous as it is, the measure is forced upon me, and I shall not shrink from it. But you shall not be called upon to play any part in the transaction. I alone will do it. I alone will be responsible for all that may ensue."

"We shall all be responsible!" he rejoined. "You will not only ruin yourself, but all your family, if this fearful step be taken. Hitherto we have had right on our side, but henceforth we shall be more culpable than the others."

"I am resolved upon the course," cried Lady Lake; "and all your arguments, all your warnings, will not dissuade me from it, so you may spare your breath, Sir Thomas. As you see, I have omitted the charge of witchcraft, and have only made the Countess confess her criminality with Lord Roos, and of this we have had abundant proofs; nay, we should have them still, if those condemnatory letters of hers, which had come into our possession, had not been stolen. That mischance necessitates the present measure. Having managed to deprive us of our weapons, Lord Roos thinks himself secure. But he will find his mistake when this document is produced to confound him."

"I tremble at the thought," groaned the Secretary of State.

"These fears are worse than womanish," exclaimed his lady. "Shake them off, and be yourself. Who is to prove that the confession proceeds not from the Countess? Not she herself; since no one will believe her. Not Lord Roos; for he will be equally discredited. Not Diego; for his testimony would be valueless. The Countess's handwriting has been so skilfully imitated that the falsification cannot be detected. Compare it with this note written by herself to Lady Roos, and which, though it proves nothing, has so far answered my purpose. Compare, I say, the writing of the confession and the signature with this note, and declare if you can discern any difference between them. As to the signatures of Lord Roos and Diego affixed to the document, they are equally well simulated."

"That the forgery is skilfully executed, I do not deny," replied the Secretary of State; "and that circumstance, though it does not lessen the crime, may lessen the chance of detection. Since nothing I can urge will turn you from your design, and you are determined to employ this dangerous instrument, at least be cautious in its use. Terrify Lord Roos with it, if you choose. Threaten to lay it before the Earl of Exeter—before the King himself—in case of our son-in-law's non-compliance with your demands. But beware how you proceed further. Do not part with it for a moment; so that, if need be, you may destroy it. Do you heed me, my lady?"

"I do, Sir Thomas," she replied. "Be assured I will act with due caution. I am glad to find you are coming round to my views, and are disposed to countenance the measure."

"I countenance it!" exclaimed the Secretary of State, in alarm. "No such thing. I disapprove of it entirely, and cannot sufficiently reprehend it. But, as I well know, when you have once made up your mind, the fiend himself cannot turn you from your purpose, I give you the best counsel I can under the circumstances. I wash my hands of it altogether. Would to Heaven I had never been consulted upon it—never even been made acquainted with the project. However, as you have gone so far with me, you may go a step further, and let me know what story you mean to attach to this confession? How will you feign to have obtained it?"

"The statement I shall make will be this, and it will be borne out by so many corroborative circumstances that it will be impossible to contradict it. You observe that the document is dated on the 10th of April last. It is not without reason that it is so dated. On that day I and our daughter, Lady Roos, attended by her maid, Sarah Swarton, proceeded to the Earl of Exeter's residence at Wimbledon, for the purpose of having an interview with the Countess, and we then saw her in the presence of Lord Roos and his servant Diego."

"But you gained nothing by the journey?" remarked her husband.

"Your pardon, Sir Thomas," she rejoined; "I gained this confession. On the way back I reflected upon what had occurred, and I thought how flushed with triumph I should have been, if, instead of meeting with discomfiture, I had gained my point—if I had brought the haughty Countess to her knees—had compelled her to write out and sign a full avowal of her guilt, coupled with supplications for forgiveness from my injured daughter and myself—and as a refinement of revenge, had forced Lord Roos and his servant to attest by their signatures the truth of the confession! I thought of this—and incensed that I had not done it, resolved it *should* be done."

"An ill resolve," muttered her husband.

"In Luke Hatton, our apothecary, I had the man for my purpose," pursued Lady Lake. "Aware of his marvellous talent for imitating any writing he pleased—aware also that I could entirely rely upon him, I resolved to call in his aid."

"Imprudent woman! You have placed yourself wholly in his power," groaned Sir Thomas. "Suppose he should betray the terrible trust you have reposed in him?"

"He will not betray it," replied Lady Lake. "He is too deeply implicated in the matter not to keep silence for his own sake. But to proceed. The document, such as you see it, was drawn out by myself and transcribed by Luke Hatton, and the writing so admirably counterfeited, that Lady Exeter herself may well doubt if it be not her own. Then, as to the circumstances, they will all bear me out. We were known to have been at Wimbledon on the day in question. We were known to have had an interview with Lady Exeter, at which Lord Roos and Diego were present. The interview was private, and therefore no one can tell what took place at it; but the probabilities are that what I shall assert really did occur."

Sir Thomas signified his assent, and she went on.

"The plot is well contrived, and, with prudent management, cannot fail of success. We have the time of the supposed occurrence—the actors in it—and the scene—for I shall describe the particular room in which the interview really did take place, and I shall further bring forward Sarah Swarton, who will declare that she was concealed behind the hangings, and heard the Countess read over the confession before she signed it."

"Another party to the affair—and a woman!" ejaculated Sir Thomas. "The dangers of discovery are multiplied a hundredfold."

"The danger exists only in your imagination," said his lady. "Come, admit, Sir Thomas, that the scheme is well contrived, and that they must be cunning indeed if they escape from the meshes I have woven for them."

"You have displayed ingenuity enough, I am free to own, if it had been directed to a better end; but in the best-contrived scheme some flaw is ever found which is sure to mar it."

"You can detect no flaw in this, I am persuaded, Sir Thomas. If you can, let me know it."

"Nay, it is only when too late that such things are found out. The supposed armour of proof is then found wanting at some vital point. However, I will say no more," he observed, perceiving her impatience. "What is done cannot be undone. Have you prepared our daughter? Will she consent to aid you?"

"She will," replied Lady Lake. "I had some difficulty with her at first, but I found means to overrule her scruples, and she consented at last to act as I desired, provided all other means failed of accomplishing the object in view. And they *have* failed since we have lost those letters, for though I have one other proof left which might perhaps be adduced, I do not attach much importance to it."

"What is it?" inquired Sir Thomas, quickly.

"You shall know anon," she answered. "Suffice it, I have done all I could to avoid having recourse to the present measure, and have delayed its execution to the last moment."

"But that proof of which you were speaking?" cried Sir Thomas. "Let me hear it. Perhaps it may obviate the necessity of this dangerous proceeding."

"I do not think so. But you shall judge. Last night, our daughter and myself obtained secret admittance to Lord Roos's chamber, and we found the Countess there, and fainting in his arms."

"Why, that is enough to convict them! You want nothing more."

"Hear me to an end, and you will change your opinion. Placing the inanimate Countess on a couch, and covering her face with a handkerchief, Lord Roos had the effrontery to assert that we were mistaken; insisting that it was not Lady Exeter we beheld, but her handmaiden, Gillian Greenford: and he appealed to the perfidious knave, Diego, in confirmation of his assertion."

"But you did not leave without satisfying yourselves of the truth?" demanded Sir Thomas.

"His lordship took care we should have no means of doing so," she answered. "He caused Diego to convey her away by a secret staircase."

"'Sdeath! that was unlucky. You have no proof then that it was the Countess you beheld?"

"Nothing beyond a lock of her hair, which was secured by Lady Roos as the man was removing her."

"That may be enough," cried the Secretary of State; "and

prevent the necessity of resorting to this frightful expedient. We must see the girl, and interrogate her. Gillian Greenford you say she is called. She shall be brought hither at once."

"It is possible she may be without," returned Lady Lake. "Before I came here, I summoned her in your name."

"We will see," cried Sir Thomas, striking upon the bell. And the usher, appearing to the summons, informed him that in effect the damsel in question was in attendance. "She seems much alarmed, Sir Thomas," said the usher, "and has with her a young man, who appears to take a tender interest in her, and wishes to be present at the investigation."

"Let him come in with her," said the Secretary of State. And seeing the usher pause, he inquired if he had anything further to say.

"His Excellency the Spanish Ambassador and my Lord Roos are without, and desire admittance," replied the man.

Sir Thomas consulted his lady by a look; and as she made no objection, he signified his pleasure that they should be admitted, and accordingly the door was thrown open for the entrance of all the persons mentioned.

Gillian came first, and seemed much embarrassed by the situation in which she found herself. She had been well tutored for the part she had to play; but the instructions she had received entirely fled from her mind as she found herself in the presence of two such awful personages as Sir Thomas Lake and his lady, both of whom fixed keen glances upon her. Feeling ready to drop with fright, she looked at Dick Taverner, as if imploring his support. But this Dick declined to afford. His jealousy having been roused by what he had heard, he determined to be governed in his conduct towards her by the result of the investigation. Accordingly, though it cost him an effort, he held back. As the Conde de Gondomar appeared, Sir Thomas Lake arose and made him a profound salutation, which was returned with equal ceremony by the Spanish Ambassador. The latter, however, did not take a seat, but remained standing with Lord Roos, whose presence was acknowledged by a cold and distant bow from his father-in-law. The young nobleman did not appear in the slightest degree disconcerted by the reception he met with, or apprehensive of the result of the investigation. He jested apart with De Gondomar; and both he and the Spanish Ambassador appeared greatly amused by Gillian's embarrassment. Behind him stood his servant, Diego.

"You are handmaiden to the Countess of Exeter, I presume," demanded Lady Lake of the damsel.

"I am, my lady," she answered.

"The girl does not look as if the imputations cast upon her character can be true," observed Sir Thomas Lake.

As this was said, poor Gillian became suffused with blushes, and hung her head.

"Before I put any further questions to her," remarked Lady Lake, "I will ask Lord Roos if he still persists in affirming that it was this damsel who visited him last night?"

Dick Taverner looked as if his fate depended upon the response the young nobleman might make to the inquiry.

"I must decline to answer your ladyship's question," returned Lord Roos.

"Why cannot he speak out?" muttered Dick. "This uncertainty is worse than anything."

"What says the damsel herself?" observed Sir Thomas Lake. "Does she admit the charge?"

"You cannot expect her to do that, Sir Thomas," interposed Lord Roos.

"I expect her to answer my question," rejoined the Secretary of State, sharply. "Were you in Lord Roos's room last night?" he added, to Gillian.

"Oh, dear! I am ready to faint," she exclaimed. "Catch me, Dick—catch me!"

"Answer 'yes' or 'no,' or I won't," he rejoined.

"Well, then, 'yes!' if I must say something," she replied.

Poor Dick fell back, as if struck by a shot.

"I don't believe it," cried Sir Thomas.

"Nor I either," said Dick, recovering himself. "I don't believe she could do such a wicked thing. Besides, it was the foreign ambassador, there," he added, pointing to De Gondomar, "who seemed most enamoured of her yesterday; and I shouldn't have been so much surprised if she had gone to see him. Perhaps she did," he continued, addressing the poor damsel, who again hung her head.

"I can take upon me to affirm that such was not the case," observed De Gondomar.

"Have you the lock of her hair with you?" whispered Sir Thomas to his lady.

"I have," she replied, taking a small packet from her bosom.

The movement did not pass unnoticed by Lord Roos and the Spanish Ambassador, between whom an almost imperceptible smile passed.

"If you have put all the interrogations you desire to make to Gillian, madam," said Lord Roos to his mother-in-law, "perhaps she may be permitted to depart? The situation cannot be agreeable to her."

"A moment more, my lord," cried Lady Lake. "If I detain her, it is to clear her character. I know her to be perfectly innocent."

At this announcement Dick Taverner's countenance brightened, and he extended his arms towards Gillian, who gladly availed herself of his support.

"I am quite sure she was not the person I surprised in your chamber last night," continued Lady Lake.

"Indeed, madam! How do you arrive at that conviction?"

"Because that person's hair was jet black, whereas Gillian's, as we see, is of the exactly opposite colour."

Dick Taverner could not help pressing his lips against the back of the pretty damsel's neck as this was uttered.

"Your proof of this, madam?" demanded Lord Roos.

"Behold it!" she cried. "This lock of hair was cut off before your visitant escaped, and has remained in my possession ever since. Ha! how is this?" she exclaimed, as she unfolded the packet, and disclosed a tress of fair hair, evidently matching Gillian's lint-white locks. "What transformation has taken place! Witchcraft has been practised. This is the Countess's work."

"The minion must have been there, after all," cried Dick Taverner, thrusting Gillian from him.

"The charge of witchcraft will not serve your turn, madam," said Lord Roos, derisively. "The explanation is simple. Your eyes have deceived you."

"Most palpably," cried the Conde de Gondomar, who had caught Gillian in his arms, as the jealous apprentice cast her from him. "I am afraid her ladyship cannot see very clearly."

"I see clearly enough that a trick has been practised upon me," Lady Lake rejoined, sharply. "But let Lord Roos look to himself. I will have my revenge, and a terrible one it shall be."

"Do not commit yourself," said Sir Thomas, in a low tone.

"Your business here is at an end, fair maiden," said the Conde de Gondomar to Gillian; "and, as your lover abandons you, I am ready to take charge of you."

"So saying he led her forth, followed by Lord Roos, whose smile of triumph exasperated his mother-in-law almost beyond endurance.

For a moment Dick Taverner remained irresolute; but his mistress had no sooner disappeared, than he rushed after her, vowing he would have her back if it cost him his life.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE PURITAN'S PRISON.

Hugh Calveley, it has already been intimated, was lodged in a vault beneath the gateway. The place was commonly used as a sort of black-hole for the imprisonment of any refractory member of the royal household, or soldier on guard guilty of neglect of duty. Circular in shape, it contained a large pillar, to which iron rings and chains were attached. The walls were

of stone, the roof arched with ribs springing from the pillar that supported it, and the floor was paved. Window there was none; but air was admitted through a small grated aperture in the roof; and thus imperfectly ventilated, it will not be wondered at that the vault should be damp. Moisture constantly trickled down the walls and collected in pools on the broken pavement; but unwholesome as it was, and altogether unfit for occupation, it was deemed good enough for those generally thrust into it, and far too good for its present tenant.

As the prisoner exhibited no violence, the thongs with which his hands were bound were removed on his entrance to the vault, and he was allowed the free use of his limbs. The breastplate in which he was clad was taken from him, and his vesture was again closely searched; but no further discovery was made, either of concealed weapons or of any paper or letter tending to show that he had accomplices in his dread design. The only thing found upon him, indeed, was a small Bible, and this, after it had been examined, he was permitted to retain. To the interrogatories put to him by Master Dendy, the serjeant-at-arms, he returned the briefest answers; and when he had said as much as he thought fit, he obstinately refused to make further reply.

Incensed at his perversity, and determined to extort a full confession, in order that it might be laid before the King, the serjeant-at-arms ordered the manacles to be applied. But though the torture was exquisite, he bore it with firmness, and without uttering a groan, maintaining the same determined silence as before. Had he dared, Master Dendy would have had recourse to severer measures; but having no warrant for any such proceeding, he was obliged to content himself with threats. To these Hugh Calveley replied by a grim smile of contempt; but as the serjeant-at-arms was departing to make his report to Sir Thomas Lake, he said, "I have something to disclose; but it is for the King's ear alone."

"Better reveal it to me," rejoined Dendy, halting. "I have it in my power to render your situation far more tolerable, or to inflict greater torment upon you. Make your choice."

"Deal with me as you please," returned Hugh Calveley, sternly. "What I have to say is to the King, and to the King only; and though you break every bone in my body with your engines, and tear off my flesh with red-hot pincers, you shall not force the secret from me."

Master Dendy looked at him, and felt disposed to place him in the dreadful instrument of torture called Skeffington's irons, which was hanging against the wall; but the consideration that had hitherto restrained him—namely, that he was without authority for the step, and might be called to account for it—weighed with him still; wherefore he contented himself with

ordering the prisoner to be chained to the pillar; and, having seen the injunction obeyed, he left him.

In this miserable plight Hugh Calveley remained for some hours, without light and without food. How the time was passed none knew; but the two yeomen of the guard who entered the vault found him on his knees absorbed in prayer. They brought a lamp with them, and refreshments of a better kind than those usually afforded to a prisoner, and set them before him. But he refused to partake of them. The only favour he besought was permission to read his Bible; and, the lamp placed within reach, he was soon deeply engrossed in the perusal of those pages from which, when earnestly sought, consolation has ever been derived under the most trying circumstances.

Sir Jocelyn had forborne to visit the prisoner from a fear that his presence might be painful; but the office imposed upon him by the King left him no alternative; and about midnight he descended to the vault, to ascertain from personal inspection that Hugh Calveley was in safe custody. The door was unlocked by the halberdier stationed at it, and the young man found himself alone with the prisoner. He was inexpressibly shocked by the spectacle he beheld, as he had no idea how severely the unfortunate Puritan had been treated, nor of the sort of prison in which he was confined.

Hugh Calveley, who was still intently reading the Bible, which he had placed upon his knee while he held the lamp near it to throw the light upon its leaves, did not appear to be disturbed by the opening of the door, nor did he raise his eyes. But at last a deep groan issuing from the breast of the young man aroused him, and he held up the lamp to ascertain who was near. On discovering that it was Sir Jocelyn, he knitted his brow, and, after sternly regarding him for a moment, returned to his Bible without uttering a word; but finding the other maintained his post, he demanded, almost fiercely, why he was disturbed?

"Can I do aught for your relief?" rejoined the young man. "At least, I can have those chains taken off."

"Thou speakest as one in authority," cried Hugh Calveley, regarding him fixedly. "Art thou appointed to be my jailer?"

Sir Jocelyn made no answer, but averted his head.

"This only was wanting to fill up the measure of my scorn for thee," pursued the Puritan. "Thou art worthy of thine office. But show me no favour, for I will receive none at thy hands. I would rather wear these fetters to my death, however much they may gall my limbs, than have them struck off by thee. I would rather rot in this dungeon—ay, though it were worse than it is—than owe my liberation to thee. The sole favour thou canst show me is to rid me of thy presence, which is hate-

ful to me, and chases holy thoughts from my breast, putting evil in their place."

"Why should this be so, O friend of my father?" exclaimed Sir Jocelyn. "And why should my presence be hateful to you? There is no man living whom I would less willingly offend than yourself; and in all I have done, where you have been concerned, I have had no free agency. Judge me not then too harshly. I commiserate your situation from the depths of my heart, and would relieve it were it possible."

"Then wherefore persist in troubling me?" rejoined Hugh Calveley. "Have I not good cause for my dislike of you? You have disappointed the expectations I had formed of you. You failed me when I put your professions to the test. You thwarted my design at the moment when its success was certain, and when the tyrant was completely in my power. But for you I should not be here, loaded with these fetters; or if I were, I should be consoled by the thought that I had liberated my country from oppression, instead of being crushed by the sense of failure. What seek you from me, miserable time-server? Have you not had your reward for the service you have rendered the King? Is he not grateful enough? I have served as your stepping-stone to promotion. What more can I do?"

"You can cease to do me injustice," returned Sir Jocelyn. "Honours, procured as mine have been, are valueless, and I would rather be without them. I sought them not. They have been forced upon me. Look at the matter fairly, and you will see that all these consequences, whether for good or ill, have sprung from your own desperate act."

"It may be so," rejoined the Puritan. "I will not dispute it. But though ill has accrued to me, and good to you, I would not change positions with you. You will wear the tyrant's fetters for ever. I shall soon be free from mine."

"Have you nothing to say concerning your daughter?" demanded the young man.

"Nothing," replied the Puritan, with an expression of deep pain, which, however, he checked by a mighty effort. "I have done with the world, and desire not to be brought back to it."

"And you refuse to be freed from your chains?"

"My sole desire, as I have said, is to be freed from you."

"That wish at least shall be granted," replied Sir Jocelyn, as, with a sad heart, he departed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SECRET.

Thrice was the guard relieved during that long night, and as often was the prisoner visited. On the first occasion, he was found to be still engaged with his Bible, and he so continued during the whole time the man remained in the vault.

The next who came discovered him on his knees, praying loudly and fervently, and, unwilling to disturb him, left him at his devotions.

But the third who entered was struck with terror at the prisoner's appearance. He had risen from the ground, and was standing as erect as the fetters would permit, with his hands outstretched, and his eyes fixed on vacancy. He was muttering something, but his words were unintelligible. He looked like one who beheld a vision; and this impression was produced upon the man, who half expected some awful shape to reveal itself to him. But whatever it might be, spirit of good or ill, it was visible to the Puritan alone.

After gazing at him for some minutes, in mixed wonderment and fright, the halberdier ventured to draw near him. As he touched him, the Puritan uttered a fearful cry, and attempted to spring forward, as if to grasp some vanishing object, but being checked in the effort by the chain, he fell heavily to the ground, and seemed to sustain severe injury; for when the man raised him, and set him against the pillar, though he made no complaint, it was evident he suffered excruciating pain. The halberdier poured out a cup of wine, and offered it to him; but, though well-nigh fainting, he peremptorily refused it.

From this moment a marked change was perceptible in his looks. The hue of his skin became cadaverous; his eyes grew dim and glassy; and his respiration was difficult. Everything betokened that his sufferings would be speedily over, and that, however he might deserve it, Hugh Calveley would be spared the disgrace of death by the hands of the executioner. The halberdier was not unaware of his condition, and his first impulse was to summon assistance; but he was deterred from doing so by the earnest entreaty of the Puritan to be left alone; and thinking this the most merciful course he could pursue under the circumstances, he yielded to the request, scarcely expecting to behold him alive again.

It was by this same man that the door of the vault was opened to Sir Jocelyn and Aveline.

The shock experienced by the maiden at the sight of her father had well-night overcome her. She thought him dead, and such was Sir Jocelyn's first impression. The unfortunate Puritan was still propped against the pillar, as the halberdier had

left him, but his head had fallen to one side and his arms hung listlessly down. With a piercing shriek his daughter flew towards him, and kneeling beside him, raised his head gently, and gazing eagerly into his face, perceived that he still lived, though the spirit seemed ready to wing its flight from its fleshly tabernacle.

The situation was one to call forth every latent energy in Aveline's character. Controlling her emotion, she uttered no further cry, but set herself with calmness to apply such restoratives as were at hand to her father. After bathing his temples and chafing his hands, she had the satisfaction, ere long, of seeing him open his eyes. At first, he seemed to have a difficulty in fixing his gaze upon her, but her voice reached his ears, and the feeble pressure of his hand told that he knew her.

The power of speech returned to him at length, and he faintly murmured, "My child, I am glad to see you once more. I thought all was over; but it has pleased Heaven to spare me for a few moments to give you my blessing. Bow down your head, O my daughter, and take it; and though given by a sinner like myself, it shall profit you! May the merciful God, who pardoneth all that repent, even at the last hour, and watcheth over the orphan, bless you, and protect you!"

"Amen!" exclaimed Jocelyn, fervently.

"Who was it spoke?" demanded the Puritan. And as no answer was returned, he repeated the inquiry.

"It was I—Jocelyn Mounchensey, the son of your old friend," replied the young man.

"Come nigh to me, Jocelyn," said the dying man; "I have done you wrong, and entreat your pardon."

"O, talk not thus!" cried Jocelyn, springing towards him. "I have nothing to forgive, but much to be forgiven."

"You have a noble heart, Jocelyn," rejoined Hugh Calveley; "and in that respect resemble your father. In his name, I conjure you to listen to me. You will not refuse my dying request. I have a sacred trust to commit to you."

"Name it!" cried the young man; "and rest assured it shall be fulfilled."

"Give me some wine," gasped the Puritan, faintly. "My strength is failing fast, and it may revive me."

And with great effort he swallowed a few drops from the cup filled for him by Jocelyn. Still, his appearance was so alarming, that the young man could not help urging him not to delay.

"I understand," replied Hugh Calveley, slightly pressing his hand. "You think I have no time to lose; and you are right. My child, then, is the trust I would confide to you. Son, behold thy sister! Daughter, behold thy brother!"

"I will be more than a brother to her," cried Sir Jocelyn, earnestly.

"More thou canst not be," rejoined Hugh Calveley; "unless——"

"Unless what?" demanded Sir Jocelyn.

"I cannot explain," cried the Puritan, with an expression of agony; "there is not time. Suffice it, she is already promised in marriage."

"Father!" exclaimed Aveline, in surprise, and with something of reproach. "I never heard of such an engagement before. It has been made without my consent."

"I charge you to fulfil it, nevertheless, my child, if it be required," said Hugh Calveley, solemnly. "Promise me this, or I shall not die content. Speak! Let me hear you."

And she reluctantly gave the required promise.

Sir Jocelyn uttered an exclamation of anguish.

"What afflicts you, my son?" demanded the Puritan.

"To whom have you promised your daughter in marriage?" inquired the young man. "You have constituted me her brother, and I am therefore entitled to inquire."

"You will learn when the demand is made," said the Puritan. "You will then know why I have given the promise, and the nature of the obligation imposed upon my daughter to fulfil it."

"But is this obligation ever to remain binding?" demanded Sir Jocelyn.

"If the claim be not made within a year after my death, she is discharged from it," replied Hugh Calveley.

"O, thanks, father, thanks!" exclaimed Aveline.

At this moment the door of the vault was thrown open, and two persons entered, the foremost of whom Sir Jocelyn instantly recognised as the King. The other was his Majesty's physician, Doctor Mayerne Turquet. A glance sufficed to explain to the latter the state of the Puritan.

"*Ah! parbleu!* the man is dying, your Majesty," he exclaimed.

"Deeing! is he?" cried James. "The mair reason he suld tell his secret to us without procrastination. Harkye, prophet of ill!" he continued, as he strode forward. "The judgment of Heaven ye predicated for us seems to have fallen on your ainsell, and to have laid you low, even afore our arm could touch you. Ye have gude reason to be thankful you have escaped the woodie; sae e'en make a clean breast of it; confess your enormities, and reveal to us the secret matter whilk we are tauld ye hae to communicate!"

"Let all else withdraw a few paces," said Hugh Calveley, "and do thou, O King! approach me. What I have to say is for thine ear alone."

"There will be no danger in granting his request?" inquired James of his physician.

"None whatever," replied Doctor Mayerne Turquet. "The only danger is in delay. Your Majesty should lose no time. The man is passing rapidly away. A few moments more, and he will have ceased to exist."

On a sign from the King, Sir Jocelyn then stepped aside, but Aveline refused to quit her father, even for a moment.

As James drew near, Hugh Calveley raised himself a little in order to address him. "I say unto thee, O King," he cried, "as Elijah said unto Ahab, 'Because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord—behold! I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity. And I will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin.'"

"Now the muckle Deil seize thee, villain!" exclaimed James, furiously. "Is it to listen to thy texts that thou hast brought me hither?" And as Hugh Calveley, exhausted by the effort he had made, fell back with a groan, he bent his head towards him, crying, "The secret, man, the secret! or the tormentor shall wring it from thee?"

The Puritan essayed to speak, but his voice was so low that it did not reach the ears of the King.

"What sayest thou?" he demanded. "Speak louder. Saul of our body!" he exclaimed, after a moment's pause, during which the sudden alteration that took place in the prisoner's features made him suspect that all was over. "Our belief is he will never speak again. He hath escaped us, and ta'en his secret wi' him."

A loud shriek burst from Aveline, as she fell upon her father's lifeless body.

"Let us forth," cried the King, stopping his ears. "We carena to be present at scenes like this. We hae had a gude riddance o' this traitor, though we wad hae gladly heard what he had to tell. Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey, ye will see that this young woman be cared for; and when ye have caused her to be removed elsewhere, follow us to the tennis-court, to which we shall incontinently adjourn."

So saying, he quitted the vault with his physician.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LUKE HATTON.

Feigning sudden indisposition (and the excuse was not altogether without foundation), the Countess of Exeter quitted Theobalds Palace on the day after her unlucky visit to Lord Roos's chamber, and proceeded to her husband's residence at Wimbledon, where she was speedily joined by her lover, who brought her word of the advantage he had gained over their foe.

"I have fairly checkmated my gracious mother-in-law," he

THE PURITAN.

cried, with a laugh; "and it would have diverted you as much as it did me and De Gondomar, who was present on the occasion, if you could have witnessed her rage and mortification when she discovered the change that had been effected; and that in place of your magnificent black ringlet (which I now wear next my heart, and shall ever keep as a love-token), she had only a sorry specimen of your handmaiden's lint-white locks. As I live, it was truly laughable. The good lady would have annihilated me if she could; and threatened me with terrible reprisals. At first, she tried to attribute the transformation, which she could not otherwise account for, to witchcraft; and though I derided the charge, I must needs say, the trick was so cleverly performed that it *did* look like magic. The packet containing the tress of hair had never been out of her own keeping. This she affirmed; and it was true. But there was a friendly hand to open it nevertheless—to purloin its priceless treasure, and to substitute something of a similar kind, though of comparatively little value, in its place. That hand—one not likely to be suspected—was no other than that of my lady's confidential attendant, Sarah Swarton. The juggle was played by her at the instance of Diego. Anticipating some such occurrence as the present, and desirous of having a spy upon the movements of our enemies, I some time since directed Diego to pay secret court to Sarah, and my forethought has now been rewarded. The main difficulty lay with poor Gillian. She was greatly embarrassed by her situation; and her perplexity was increased by the presence of a jealous lover in the shape of an apprentice, who refused to leave her till his doubts should be satisfied. This was awkward, as the story could not be very well reconciled so as to suit all parties. Accordingly, when the discovery was made, which seemed to proclaim the poor girl's infidelity, the youth's rage and consternation were nearly equal to Lady Lake's; a circumstance that added considerable zest to the comedy. But I see it does not divert you so much as I expected, and therefore, to relieve your mind, I may tell you that the jealous varlet soon repented of his rash determination, and pursuing his mistress, whom De Gondomar had considerately taken under his protection, prevailed upon her to give the amorous ambassador the slip, and return with him to her father's abode at Tottenham."

"I am right glad to hear it," said the Countess. "Though I have seen so little of Gillian, I cannot help taking an interest in her; she is so pretty, and so innocent in appearance, and her manners are so artless and engaging. I owe her some reparation for the mischief I have done her, and will not neglect to make it. I am sorry I ever was induced by you to take her into my service; and I am thankful to hear she has escaped De Gondomar's snares."

"You are wonderfully interested about her, methinks, Frances;

and I hope she will be grateful for your consideration," rejoined Lord Roos, with a laugh. "But I should not be surprised if De Gondomar still gained his point. It is not his way to give up a pursuit he has once undertaken. However, to leave the pretty damsel to her fate, which will depend entirely on her own conduct, let us return to ourselves. We have good reason to be satisfied with the issue of this adventure of the lock of hair. Nevertheless, that recurrence to the charge of witchcraft on the part of my vindictive mother-in-law shows the extent of her malice, and I cannot doubt that in threatening me with reprisals she will be as good as her word. It behoves us, therefore, to be beforehand with her. What she may intend I cannot say; but I am satisfied she has a formidable scheme on foot, and that nothing but her husband's interposition prevented its disclosure when she was so violently incensed against me."

"You fill me with terror, William," exclaimed the Countess. "Will this woman's hostility towards me never cease?"

"Never," replied Lord Roos, with a sudden change of manner, and laying aside the levity he had hitherto exhibited. "There is but one way of ending the struggle. Luke Hatton can help us to it. Persuaded we should require him, I have brought him with me. He waits in the hall below with Diego. Shall I summon him to our conference?"

"On no account," exclaimed Lady Exeter, hastily; "I will not see him. You have done wrong to bring that poisoner here, my lord. You will destroy me."

"Listen to me, Frances," replied Lord Roos. "The next step taken by Lady Lake will be fatal to us. There must be no delay, no irresolution on our part, or all is lost. I cannot depend upon myself, or I would not call in another's aid. You will comprehend how wanting in firmness I am, when I tell you what happened the other night. Incredible as it may sound, my wife, in order to prove her devotion to me and to free me from further annoyance on her part, offered to take poison; and but for my interference (fool that I was to stay her!) would have drained the phial containing the deadly potion. The weakness was momentary, and I reproached myself for it when too late. But it convinced me that a firmer hand than mine must be employed in the task."

"And can you, after what you have related, William,—can you seriously meditate the destruction of a fond woman, who has generosity enough to lay down her life for you? This is more incredible than the rest—more monstrously wicked."

"Wicked it may be; but the excuse—if I have any—lies in my overwhelming passion for you, Frances," replied Lord Roos, in a frenzied tone. "And it seems decided by the relentless destiny that governs me, that the continued indulgence of the fatal passion shall only be purchased at the price of my soul.

That penalty I am prepared to pay rather than lose you. I will become obdurate, will turn my heart to stone, so that it shall no more melt at the tears of this fond, foolish woman; and I will slay her without remorse. Any other obstacle between us shall be removed!—be it her mother, her father—your husband! I will immolate a hundred victims at the altar of our love. I will shrink from nothing to make you mine for ever. For I would rather share eternal bale with you, Frances, than immortal bliss with another."

"You almost make me fancy some evil being has obtained possession of you, William," said the Countess, gazing at him with affright.

"It may be that the Fiend himself hath accepted my wild offer," he rejoined, gloomily; "but, if my wish be granted, it matters not."

"I will not listen to such fearful impiety," said the Countess, shuddering. "Let us dismiss this subject for the present, and recur to it when you are calmer."

"It cannot be postponed, Frances. Time presses, and even now Lady Lake may have got the start of us. I shall be calm enough when this is over. Will you consent to see Luke Hatton?"

"Why need I see him?" inquired the Countess, with increasing uneasiness. "Why will you force his hateful presence upon me? If the deed must be done, why can you not alone undertake it?"

"I will tell why I cannot," he replied, in a sombre tone, and regarding her fixedly. "I must have a partner in the crime. It will bind us to each other in links not to be severed. I shall have no fear of losing you then, Countess. I go to bring Luke Hatton to you."

And without waiting for her reply, he strode out of the room. Lady Exeter would have arrested him, but she had not the nerve to do so, and with an exclamation of anguish she fell back in her chair.

"What dominion sin has usurped over me!" she mentally ejaculated. "I have lost the power of resisting its further encroachment. I see the enormity of the offence I am about to commit, and though my soul revolts at it, I cannot hold back. I am as one on the brink of a precipice, who beholds the dreadful gulf before him into which another step must plunge him, yet is too giddy to retreat, and must needs fall over. Pity me, kind Heaven! I am utterly helpless without thy aid."

While the unhappy lady thus unavailingly deplored the sad position in which her own misconduct had placed her, and from which she felt wholly incapable of extricating herself;—while in this wretched frame of mind, she awaited her lover's return—with, as we have shown, some remains of good struggling with the evil in her bosom—we will cast a hasty glance round the chamber in which she sat. And we are prompted to do this, not

because it merits particular description, but because it was the room referred to by Lady Lake as the scene of the confession she had forged.

The apartment, then, was spacious, and handsomely furnished in the heavy taste of the period, with but little to distinguish it from other rooms visited by us in the course of this story. Like most of them, it had a gloomy air, caused by the dark hue of its oaken panels and the heavy folds of its antiquated and faded tapestry. The latter was chiefly hung against the lower end of the chamber, and served as a screen to one of the doors. At the opposite end, there was a wide and deep bay-window, glowing with stained glass, amid the emblazonry of which might be discerned the proud escutcheon of the house of Exeter, with the two lions rampant forming its supporters. On the right of the enormous carved mantelpiece, which, with its pillars, statues, 'scutcheons, and massive cornice, mounted to the very ceiling, was hung a portrait of the Earl of Exeter—a grave, dignified personage, clad in the attire of Elizabeth's time; and on the left was a likeness of the Countess herself, painted in all the pride of her unequalled beauty, and marvellous in resemblance then; but how different in expression from her features now!

In the recess of the window stood an oak table, covered with a piece of rich carpet fringed with gold, on which a massive silver inkstand and materials for writing were placed; and this table was seized upon by Lady Lake as a feature in her plot. Here she would have it the confession was signed by the Countess.

Another point in reference to this scheme must not be passed unnoticed. We have mentioned the heavy hangings at the lower end of the room. According to the plotter, it was behind these that Sarah Swarton—the intended witness of the imaginary scene—was concealed. The principal subjects represented on the arras were the Judgment of Solomon, and the Temptation of our first Parents in the Garden by the Serpent. The hangings had evidently not been removed for years, and did not reach within two feet of the ground—a circumstance that had escaped the attention of Lady Lake—proving the truth of her husband's observation, that in the best-contrived plot some imperfection will exist certain to operate in its detection.

To return to the unhappy Countess. So lost was she in reflection, that she did not remark Lord Roos's return till made aware of it by a slight touch on the shoulder. When she raised her eyes, they fell upon an object that inspired her with the dread and aversion that a noxious reptile might have produced. She had never seen Luke Hatton before; and if she had figured him to her mind at all, it was not as anything agreeable; but she was not prepared for so hideous and revolting a personage as he appeared to be. His face was like an ugly mask, on which a

sardonic grin was stamped. His features were large and gaunt, and he had the long, hooked nose, and the sharp-pointed bestial ears of a satyr, with leering eyes—betokening at once sensuality and cunning. He had the chin and beard of a goat, and crisply-curled hair of a pale yellow colour. With all this, there was something sordid in his looks as well as his attire, which showed that to his other vices he added that of avarice. A mock humility, belied by the changeless sneer upon his countenance, distinguished his deportment. It could be seen at once that, however cringing he might be, he despised the person he addressed. Moreover, in spite of all his efforts to control it, there was something sarcastic in his speech. His doublet and hose, both of which had endured some service, and were well-nigh threadbare, were tawny-coloured; and he wore a short yellow cloak, a great ruff of the same colour, and carried a brown steeple-crowned hat in his hand.

"I await your ladyship's commands," said Luke Hatton, bowing obsequiously.

"I have none to give you," Lady Exeter rejoined, with irrepressible disgust. "I have not sent for you. Go hence."

Not at all abashed by this reception, Luke Hatton maintained his place, and threw an inquiring glance at Lord Roos.

"My dear Countess," said the young nobleman, seating himself negligently upon a tabouret beside her, "I must pray you not to dismiss this worthy man so hastily. You will find him eminently serviceable; and as to his trustworthiness, I have the best reasons for feeling satisfied of it, because I hold in my hand a noose, which, whenever I please, I can tighten round his neck. Of this he is quite aware, and therefore he will serve us faithfully, as well from fear as from gratitude."

"Her ladyship may place entire confidence in me," remarked Luke Hatton, with a grin. "This is not the first affair of the kind in which I have been engaged. I have prepared potions and powders which Mistress Turner (with whose reputation your ladyship must needs be acquainted) used to vend to her customers. My draughts have removed many a troublesome husband, and silenced many a jealous wife. I have helped many an heir to the speedy enjoyment of an inheritance, which, but for my assistance, would not have come to him for years. The lover with a rival in his way, who has come to me, has soon been freed from all anxiety on that score. The courtier, eager for a post which a superior held, has gained it by my aid. Yet none of those whom I have thus benefited have been suspected. Your ladyship, I repeat, need have no fears of me—and no scruples with me. State your wishes, and they shall be implicitly obeyed."

"I have no wish, except to be relieved from a presence which is disagreeable to me," replied the Countess.

Again Luke Hatton consulted Lord Roos with a regard.

"I find I must act for her ladyship," said the young nobleman. "You will take, therefore, the instructions I shall give you as proceeding from her. What two names do you find upon that paper?"

"Those of your lordship's wife and mother-in-law," returned Luke Hatton.

"You comprehend what her ladyship would have done with those persons?" said Lord Roos, looking at him steadfastly.

"Perfectly," replied Luke Hatton.

"O, do not give this fatal order, my lord!" cried Lady Exeter, trembling.

"How many days do you require to effect their removal?" demanded Lord Roos, without appearing to notice her remark.

"I do not require many hours," replied Luke Hatton; "but it will be well not to be too precipitate. Neither must they die at the same time. All precaution shall be taken. The names are placed in a particular order. Is it so the Countess would have them taken? In that case I must commence with Lady Roos."

"Wretch! dost thou dare to make such an appeal to me?" cried Lady Exeter, rising. "Begone instantly, I say. Thou hast no order whatever from me; or if thou fanciest so, I revoke it."

"The order cannot be revoked," cried Lord Roos, grasping her arm. "This is not a time for hesitation or repentance. Having commenced the work you must go through with it—whether you will or not."

"Whether I will or not!" exclaimed Lady Exeter, regarding him with angry surprise. "Have I heard you aright, my lord? Am I to be forced into association in this foul deed? Have I sunk so low in your esteem that you venture to treat me thus?"

"Pardon me, Frances—pardon me!" he cried, imploringly. "I have said more than I intended. If I appear to exercise undue influence over you now, you will forgive me hereafter, because the situation is one that requires decision, and that quality I possess in a higher degree than yourself. Luke Hatton must obey the orders given him. And you must sanction them."

"Never!" she exclaimed, emphatically.

"Then we part for ever," cried Lord Roos. "No matter what the pang may be—nor what befals me—I will go. Farewell for ever, Countess!"

"Stay!" she cried. "We must not part thus."

"Then you consent?" he exclaimed. "Luke Hatton receives his orders from you?"

"Ask me not that question!" she cried, with a shudder.

"If her ladyship will but sign this," said Luke Hatton, holding towards her the paper on which the names were written, "it will suffice for me."

"You hear what he says, Frances. You will do it?" cried Lord Roos. "'Tis but a few strokes of a pen."

"Those few strokes will cost me my soul," she rejoined. "But if it must be so, it must. Give me the pen."

And as Lord Roos complied, she signed the paper.

"Now you may go," said Lord Roos to Luke Hatton, who received the paper with a diabolical grin. "You may count upon your reward."

"In a week's time, my lord," said Luke Hatton, still grinning, and shifting his glance from the half-fainting Countess to the young nobleman; "in a week's time," he repeated, "you will have to put on mourning for your wife, and in a month for your mother-in-law."

And with a cringing bow, and moving with a soft, cat-like footstep, he quitted the room, leaving the guilty pair alone together.

CHAPTER XXX.

POISON.

The execution of Lady Lake's criminal and vindictive project would not have been long deferred, after the defeat she had sustained from Lord Roos, but for her husband's determined opposition. This may appear surprising in a man so completely under his wife's governance as was Sir Thomas; but the more he reflected upon the possible consequences of the scheme, the more averse to it he became; and finding all arguments unavailing to dissuade his lady from her purpose, he at last summoned up resolution enough positively to interdict it.

But the project was only deferred, and not abandoned. The forged confession was kept in readiness by Lady Lake for production on the first favourable opportunity.

Not less disinclined to the measure than her father was Lady Roos, though the contrary had been represented to Sir Thomas by his lady; but accustomed to yield blind obedience to her mother's wishes, she had been easily worked upon to acquiesce in the scheme, especially as the fabricated confession did not appear to hurt her husband, for whom (though she did not dare to exhibit it) she maintained a deep and unchanging affection. So utterly heart-broken was she by the prolonged and painful struggle she had undergone, that she was now almost indifferent to its issue.

For some time her health had given way under the severe shocks she had endured; but all at once more dangerous symptoms began to manifest themselves, and she became so greatly

indisposed that she could not leave her room. Extremely distressing in its effects, the attack resembled fever. Inextinguishable thirst tormented her; burning pains; throbbing in the temples; and violent fluttering of the heart. No alleviation of her sufferings could be obtained from the remedies administered by Luke Hatton, who was in constant attendance upon her; nor will this be wondered at, since we are in the secret of his dark doings. On the contrary, the fever increased in intensity; and at the end of four days of unremitting agony,—witnessed with cynical indifference by the causer of the mischief,—it was evident that her case was desperate.

From the first Lady Lake had been greatly alarmed, for with all her faults she was an affectionate mother, though she had a strange way of showing her affection; and she was unremitting in her attentions to the sufferer, scarcely ever quitting her bedside. After a few days, however, thus spent in nursing her daughter, she herself succumbed to a like malady. The same devouring internal fire scorched her up, and raged within her veins; the same unappeasable thirst tormented her; and unable longer to fulfil her task, she confided it to Sarah Swarton, and withdrew to another chamber, communicating by a side door, masked by drapery, with that of Lady Roos.

Devoted to her mistress, Sarah Swarton would have sacrificed her life to restore her to health; and she cared not though the fever might be infectious. The gentleness and resignation of the ill-fated lady, which failed to move Luke Hatton, melted her to tears; and it was with infinite grief that she saw her, day by day, sinking slowly but surely into the grave. To Lady Roos, the presence of Sarah Swarton was an inexpressible comfort. The handmaiden was far superior to her station, with a pleasing countenance and prepossessing manner, and possessed of the soft voice so soothing to the ear of pain. But the chief comfort derived by Lady Roos from the society of Sarah Swarton, was the power of unbosoming herself to her respecting her husband, and of pouring her sorrows into a sympathizing ear. Lord Roos had never been near his wife since her seizure—nor, that she could learn, had made any inquiries about her; but notwithstanding his heartless conduct, her great desire was to behold him once more before she died, and to breathe some last words into his ear; and she urged the wish so strongly upon her confidante, that the latter promised, if possible, to procure its accomplishment.

A week had now nearly elapsed—the fatal term appointed by Luke Hatton—and it could be no longer doubted that, if the last gratification sought by Lady Roos were to be afforded her, it must not be delayed.

The poor sufferer was wasted to a skeleton; her cheeks hollow; eyes sunk in deep cavities, though the orbs were unnaturally

bright; and her frame so debilitated, that she could scarcely raise herself from the pillow.

Sarah Swarton accordingly resolved to set out upon her errand; but before doing so, she sought an interview with Lady Lake, for the purpose of revealing certain fearful suspicions she had begun to entertain of Luke Hatton. She would have done this before, but there was almost insuperable difficulty in obtaining a few words in private of her ladyship. The apothecary was continually passing from room to room, hovering nigh the couches of his patients, as if afraid of leaving them for a moment, and he seemed to regard Sarah herself with distrust. But he had now gone forth, and she resolved to take advantage of his absence to make her communication.

CHAPTER XXXI.

COUNTER-POISON.

The physical tortures endured by Lady Lake were exceeded by her mental anguish. While the poison raged within her veins, the desire of vengeance inflamed her breast; and her fear was lest she should expire without gratifying it. Bitterly did she now upbraid herself for having delayed her vindictive project. More than once she consulted Luke Hatton as he stood beside her couch, with the habitual sneer upon his lips, watching the progress of his own infernal work, as to the possibility of renovating her strength, if only for an hour, in order that she might strike the blow. But he shook his head, and bade her wait. Wait, however, she would not; and she became at length so impatient, that he agreed to make the experiment, telling her he would prepare a draught which should stimulate her into new life for a short time, but he would not answer for the after consequences. This was enough. She eagerly grasped at the offer. Revenge must be had, cost what it would. And it was to prepare the potion which was to effect her brief cure that Luke Hatton had quitted her chamber, and left the coast clear for Sarah Swarton.

Startled by the abrupt entrance and looks of the handmaiden, Lady Lake anxiously inquired if all was well with her daughter.

"As well as it seems ever likely to be with her, my lady," replied Sarah Swarton. "She is somewhat easier now. But has your ladyship courage to listen to what I have to tell you?"

"Have I ever shown want of courage, Sarah, that you should put such a question?" rejoined Lady Lake, sharply.

"But this is something frightful, my lady."

"Then do not hesitate to disclose it."

"Has your ladyship never thought it a strange illness by which you and my Lady Roos have been seized?" said Sarah, coming close up to her, and speaking in a low, hurried tone, as if afraid of being overheard or interrupted.

"Why should I think it strange, Sarah?" returned Lady Lake, regarding her fixedly. "It is a dreadful and infectious fever which I have taken from my daughter; and that is the reason why Sir Thomas, and all others, except Luke Hatton and yourself, are forbidden to come near us. What we should have done without you, Sarah, I know not; for Luke Hatton tells me the rest of the household shun us as they would a pestilence. I trust you will escape the disorder, and if I am spared, your devotion shall be adequately requited. As to Luke Hatton, he seems to have no fear of it."

"He has no reason to be afraid," replied Sarah, significantly. "This is no fever, my lady."

"How!" cried Lady Lake. "Would you set up your ignorance against the skill and science of Luke Hatton? Or do you mean to insinuate——"

"I insinuate nothing, my lady," interrupted Sarah; "but I beseech you to bear with fortitude the disclosure I am about to make to you. In a word, my lady, I am as certain as I am of standing here, that poison has been administered both to you and to my Lady Roos."

At this terrible communication, a mortal sickness came over Lady Lake. Thick damps gathered upon her brow, and she fixed her haggard eyes upon Sarah.

"Poisoned!" she muttered; "poisoned! If so, there is but one person who can have done it—but one—except yourself, Sarah!"

"If I had committed the crime, should I have come hither to warn you, my lady?" rejoined Sarah.

"Then it must be Luke Hatton."

"Ay," replied Sarah, looking round anxiously. "It is he. When he did not think I noticed him, I chanced to see him pour a few drops from a phial into the drink he prepares for your ladyship and my Lady Roos; and my suspicions being aroused by his manner as much as by the circumstance, I watched him narrowly, and found that this proceeding was repeated with every draught; with this difference merely, that the dose was increased in strength by one additional drop; the potion administered to your ladyship being some degrees less powerful than that given to my dear lady, and no doubt being intended to be slower in its effects. That it was poison, I am certain, since I have tested it upon myself, by sipping a small quantity of the liquid; and I had reason to repent my rashness, for I soon perceived I had the same symptoms of illness as those which distress your ladyship."

"Why did you not caution me sooner, Sarah?" said Lady Lake, horror-stricken by this narration.

"I could not do so, my lady," she replied. "It was only yesterday that I arrived at a positive certainty in the matter, and after my imprudence in tasting the drink, I was very ill—indeed, I am scarcely well yet; and, to tell truth, I was afraid of Luke Hatton, as I am sure he would make away with me, without a moment's hesitation, if he fancied I had discovered his secret. Oh, I hope he will not come back and find me here!"

"Who can have prompted him to the deed?" muttered Lady Lake. "But why ask, since I know my enemies, and therefore know his employers! Not a moment must be lost, Sarah. Let Sir Thomas Lake be summoned to me immediately. If he be at Theobalds, at Greenwich, or Windsor, let messengers be sent after him, praying him to use all possible despatch in coming to me. I cannot yet decide what I will do, but it shall be something terrible. Oh, that I could once more confront the guilty pair! And I will do it—I will do it! Revenge will give me strength."

"I cannot undertake to bring the Countess hither, my lady," said Sarah. "But I may now venture to inform you that I am charged with a message from my dear lady to her cruel husband, with which I am persuaded he will comply, and come to her."

"Lure him hither, and speedily, by any means you can, Sarah," rejoined Lady Lake. "Before you go, help to raise me from my couch, and place me in that chair. It is well," she cried, as her wishes were complied with. "I do not feel so feeble as I expected. I was sure revenge would give me strength. Now give me my black velvet robe and my coif. Even in this extremity I would only appear as beseems me. And hark ye, Sarah, open that drawer, and take out the weapon you will find within it. Do as I bid you quickly, wench. I may need it."

"Here it is, my lady," replied Sarah, taking out a dagger, and giving it to Lady Lake, who immediately concealed it in the folds of her robe.

"Now go," pursued the lady; "I am fully prepared. Let not a moment be lost in what you have to do. Do not give any alarm; but bid two of the trustiest of the household hold themselves in readiness without, and if I strike upon the bell, to rush in upon the instant. Or if Luke Hatton should come forth, let him be detained. You understand?"

"Perfectly, my lady," replied Sarah, "and I make no doubt they will obey. I am sure it has only been Luke Hatton who, by his false representations, has kept them away, and I will remove the impression he has produced."

"Do not explain more than is needful at present," said Lady Lake. "We know not precisely how this plot may have been laid, and must take its authors by surprise. You were once

more intimate than I liked with that Spanish knave, Diego. Breathe not a word to him, or all will be repeated to his master."

"Rest assured I will be careful, my lady. I have seen nothing whatever of Diego of late, and care not if I never behold him again. But what is to happen to my dear lady?"

"Leave her to me," replied Lady Lake. "I hope yet to be able to save her. Ha! here comes the villain. Away with you, Sarah, and see that my orders are obeyed."

The handmaiden did not require the command to be repeated, but hastily quitted the room, casting a terrified look at the apothecary, who entered it at the same moment.

Luke Hatton appeared greatly surprised on finding Lady Lake risen from her couch, and could not help exclaiming, as he quickly advanced towards her—"You up, my lady! This is very imprudent, and may defeat my plans."

"No doubt you think so," rejoined Lady Lake; "but knowing you would oppose my inclination, I got Sarah to lift me from the couch, and tire me during your absence. Have you prepared the mixture?"

"I have, my lady," he replied, producing a small phial.

"Give it me," she cried, taking it from him.

After examining the pale yellow fluid it contained for a moment, she took out the glass stopper, and, smelling at it, perceived it to be a very subtle and volatile spirit.

"Is this poison?" she demanded, fixing her eyes keenly upon Luke Hatton.

"On the contrary, my lady," he replied, without expressing any astonishment at the question, "it would be an antidote to almost any poison. It is the rarest cordial that can be prepared, and the secret of its composition is only known to myself. When I said your ladyship would incur great risk in taking it, I meant that the reaction from so powerful a stimulant would be highly dangerous. But you declared you did not heed the consequences."

"Nor do I," she rejoined. "Yet I would see it tasted."

"Your mind shall be made easy on that score in a moment, my lady," said Luke Hatton.

And taking a small wine-glass that stood by, he rinsed it with water and carefully wiped it; after which he poured a few drops of the liquid into it and swallowed them.

During this proceeding, Lady Lake's gaze never quitted him for a second. Apparently satisfied with the test, she bade him return the phial to her.

"You had better let me pour it out for you, my lady," he replied, cleansing the glass as before. "The quantity must be exactly observed. Twenty drops, and no more."

"My hand is as steady as your own, and I can count the

drops as accurately," she rejoined, taking the phial from him. "Twenty, you say?"

"Twenty, my lady," rejoined Hatton, evidently displeased; "but perhaps you had better confine yourself to fifteen, or even ten. 'Twill be safer."

"You think the larger dose might give me too much strength—ha! What say you to fifty, or a hundred?"

"It must not be, my lady—it must not be. You will destroy yourself. It is my duty to prevent you. I must insist upon your giving me back the phial, unless you will consent to obey my orders."

"But I tell you, man, I will have a hundred drops of the cordial," she cried, pertinaciously.

"And I say you shall not, my lady," he rejoined, unable in his anger to maintain the semblance of respect he had hitherto preserved, and endeavouring to obtain forcible possession of the phial.

But she was too quick for him. And as he stretched out his hand for the purpose, the dagger gleamed before his eyes.

"Back, miscreant!" she cried; "your over-eagerness has betrayed you. I now fully believe what I have hitherto doubted, that this is a counter-poison, and that I may safely use it. It is time to unmask you, and to let you know that your villanies are discovered. I am aware of the malignant practices you have resorted to, and that my daughter and myself would have been destroyed by your poisonous preparations. But I now feel some security in the antidote I have obtained; and if I do perish, I have the satisfaction of knowing that I shall not die unavenged, but that certain punishment awaits you and your employers."

"On this she poured out half the contents of the phial into the glass, saying as she drank it, "I reserve the other half for Lady Roos."

Luke Hatton, who appeared thunderstricken, made no further effort to prevent her, but turned to fly. Lady Lake, however, upon whom the restorative effect of the cordial was almost magical, ordered him to stay, telling him if he went forth he would be arrested, on hearing which he sullenly obeyed her.

"You have not deceived me as to the efficacy of the potion," said the lady; "it has given me new life, and with returning vigour I can view all things as I viewed them heretofore. Now mark what I have to say, villain. You have placed me and my daughter in fearful jeopardy, but it is in your power to make reparation for the injury; and as I hold you to be a mere instrument in the matter, I am willing to spare the life you have forfeited, on condition of your making a full confession in writing of your attempt, to be used by me against your employers. Are you willing to do this, or shall I strike upon the bell, and have you bound hand and foot, and conveyed to the Gatehouse?"

"I will write that I was employed by the Countess of Exeter to poison you and my Lady Roos," replied Luke Hatton, stubbornly; "but I will do nothing more."

"That will suffice," replied Lady Lake, after a moment's reflection.

"And when I have done it, I shall be free to go?" he asked.

"You shall be free to go," she replied.

There were writing materials on an adjoining table, and, without another word, Luke Hatton sat down, and with great expedition drew up a statement which he signed, and handed to Lady Lake; asking if that was what she required?

A smile lighted up her ghastly features as she perused it.

"It will do," she said. "And now answer me one question, and you are free. Will this cordial have the same effect on my daughter as on me?"

"Precisely the same. It will cure her. But you must proceed more cautiously. Were she to take the quantity you have taken, it would kill her. Am I now at liberty to depart?"

"You are," replied Lady Lake.

So saying, she struck the bell, and immediately afterwards the door was opened; not, however, by the attendants, but by Sir Thomas Lake.

As the Secretary of State perceived that the apothecary avoided him, and would have passed forth quickly, he sternly and authoritatively commanded him to stay, exclaiming, "You stir not hence, till you have accounted to me for my daughter, who, I understand, is dying from your pernicious treatment. What ho, there! Keep strict watch without; and suffer not this man to pass forth!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

SHOWING THAT "OUR PLEASANT VICES ARE MADE THE WHIPS TO SCOURGE US."

We must now request the reader to visit the noble mansion in the Strand, erected by Thomas Cecil, then Earl of Exeter, and bearing his name; in a chamber of which Lord Roos and the Countess of Exeter will be found alone together—alone for the last time.

Very different was the deportment of the guilty pair towards each other from what it used to be. The glances they exchanged were no longer those of passionate love, but of undissembled hatred. Bitter reproaches had been uttered on one side, angry menaces on the other. Ever since the fatal order had been wrested from the Countess, her peace of mind had been entirely

destroyed, and she had become a prey to all the horrors of remorse. Perceiving the change in her sentiments towards him, Lord Roos strove, by the arts which had hitherto proved so successful, to win back the place he had lost in her affections; but failing in doing so, and irritated by her reproaches, and still more by her coldness, he gave vent to his displeasure in terms that speedily produced a decided quarrel between them; and though reconciled in appearance, they never again were to each other what they had been.

As this was to be their final meeting, they had agreed not to embitter it with unavailing reproaches and recriminations. Lord Roos acquainted the Countess that he had decided upon travelling into Italy and Spain, and remaining abroad for a lengthened period; and the announcement of his intention was received by her without an objection. Perhaps he hoped that when put to this trial she might relent. If so, he was disappointed. She even urged him not to delay his departure, and concluded her speech with these words—

"Something tells me we shall meet no more in this world. But we are certain to meet hereafter at the Judgment Seat. How shall we regard each other then?"

"Trouble me not with the question," rejoined Lord Roos, gloomily; "I have not come here to listen to sermons, and will brook no more reproaches."

"I do not mean to reproach you, William," she returned, meekly; "but the thought of our dire offence rises perpetually before me. Would we could undo what we have done!"

"I tell you it is too late," rejoined Lord Roos, harshly.

At this moment Diego suddenly presented himself, and apologizing for the abruptness of his entrance, accounted for it by saying that Sarah Swarton besought a word with his lordship. She brought a message, he added, from Lady Roos, who was much worse; and not finding his lordship at his own residence, had ventured to follow him to Exeter House to deliver it.

"I will come to her anon," said Lord Roos, carelessly.

"No, no; admit her at once, Diego," cried the Countess; "I would hear what she has to say." And the next moment Sarah Swarton being ushered into the room, she rushed up to her and eagerly demanded, "How fares it with your lady? Is there any hope for her?"

"None whatever," replied Sarah, shaking her head sadly. "She is past all chance of recovery."

"Then Heaven pardon me!" ejaculated the Countess, clasping her hands together, and falling upon her knees.

Sarah Swarton gazed at her in astonishment; while Lord Roos, rushing towards her, commanded her to rise.

"Take heed what you say and do, Countess," he whispered. "You will excite this woman's suspicions."

"Why should your ladyship implore Heaven's pardon because my poor dear lady is near her end?" inquired Sarah.

"I sue for it because I have caused her much affliction," replied the Countess.

"Your message, Sarah—your message?" interposed Lord Roos. "What have you to say to me?"

"My lady desires to see you once more before she expires, my lord," replied Sarah. "She would take leave of you; and—and—she has something to impart to you. You will not refuse her last request?"

"He will not—he will not, I am sure," cried the Countess, seeing him look irresolute.

"I did not expect to be seconded by you, my lady," observed Sarah, in increasing surprise.

"Would that I, too, might see her and obtain her forgiveness!" exclaimed the Countess, without heeding the remark.

"An idle wish, and not to be indulged," said Lord Roos.

A sudden idea appeared to strike Sarah, and she cried, "Your ladyship's desire may possibly be gratified. My poor lady desires to part in peace with all the world, even with those who have injured her. I will communicate your wishes to her, and it may be she will consent to see you."

"You shall have a reward well worthy of the service if you accomplish it," said the Countess. "Hasten to her with all speed, my lord, and I will follow in my litter, ready to attend Sarah's summons.

"I like not the plan," rejoined Lord Roos. "You are wrong to go. Why need you see her?"

"Why?" she answered, regarding him fixedly. "Because it may be some little consolation to me afterwards."

"Then go alone," said Lord Roos, savagely; "I will not accompany you."

"I do not ask you to accompany me, but to precede me," she replied. "Now, mark me, my lord," she added, in a low, firm tone, "and be assured I do not advance more than I will perform. If you refuse your wife's dying request, I will go back with Sarah and confess all to her."

Lord Roos looked as if he could have annihilated her, and muttered a terrible imprecation on her head.

"Threaten me—ay, and execute your threats hereafter, if you will," continued the Countess, in the same low, decided tone, "but go you *shall* now."

Her manner was so irresistible that Lord Roos was compelled to obey, and he quitted the room without a word more, followed by Diego and Sarah Swarton, the latter of whom signed to the Countess that she might depend upon the fulfilment of her wishes.

They had not been gone many minutes before Lady Exeter

entered her litter, and, wholly unattended by page or serving-man, except those in charge of the conveyance, caused herself to be conveyed to Sir Thomas Lake's lodgings in Whitehall.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOW THE FORGED CONFESSION WAS PRODUCED.

SUMMONING up all his firmness for the interview with his lady, Lord Roos entered her chamber, attended by Sarah Swarton, and beheld her propped up by pillows, bearing evident marks in her countenance of the severe sufferings she had endured. She was emaciated in frame, and almost livid in complexion; hollow-cheeked and hollow-eyed; but still with a look of unaltered affection for him.

Having fulfilled her mission, Sarah left them alone together.

He took the thin fingers extended towards him, and pressed them to his lips, but scarcely dared to raise his eyes towards his wife, so much was he shocked by her appearance. It was with difficulty she gave utterance to the words she addressed to him.

"I thank you for coming to me, my lord," she said; "but you will not regret your kindness. We are quite alone, are we not? My eyes are so dim that I cannot distinguish any object at the other end of the room—but I can see you plainly enough, my dear lord."

"We are alone, Elizabeth," replied Lord Roos, in a voice of some emotion, after glancing around.

"Then I may speak freely," she continued. "What I predicted has occurred. You did not do well, my dear lord, to take that phial from me and place it in other hands. Nay, start not! I know I am poisoned: I have known it from the first. But I have made no effort to save myself, for I was aware it was your will I should die."

"O, Elizabeth!" murmured her husband.

"I was aware of it," she repeated; "and as I have never voluntarily disobeyed you, I would not now thwart your purpose, even though I myself must be the sacrifice. It was to tell you this that I have sent for you. It was to forgive—to bless you."

And as she spoke she threw her arms round his neck, and he felt his cheek wet with her tears.

"This is more than I can bear," cried Lord Roos, in a voice suffocated by emotion. "I thought I had firmness for anything; but it deserts me entirely now. You are an angel of goodness, Elizabeth; as I am a demon of darkness. I do not deserve your forgiveness."

"You will deserve it, if you will comply with the request I

am about to make to you," she rejoined, looking at him beseechingly.

"Whatever it be it shall be granted, if in my power," he rejoined, earnestly, "I would redeem your life, if I could, at the price of my own. You have exorcised the evil spirit from me, Elizabeth."

"Then I shall die happy," she replied, with a smile of ineffable delight.

"But the request! What is it you would have me perform?" he asked.

"I would have you spare my mother," she replied. "I know she has been dealt with in the same way as myself; but I also know there is yet time to save her."

"It shall be done," said Lord Roos, emphatically. "Where is she?"

"In the adjoining chamber."

"Is Luke Hatton in attendance upon her?"

"In constant attendance," she rejoined. "That man has obeyed you well, my lord. But take heed of him: he is a dangerous weapon, and may injure the hand that employs him. Strike gently upon that bell. He will attend the summons."

Lord Roos complied; when, to his astonishment and dismay, the curtains shrouding the entrance to the adjoining room were drawn aside, and Lady Lake stalked from behind them. Never before had she surveyed her son-in-law with such a glance of triumph as she threw upon him now.

"You were mistaken, you see, Elizabeth," said Lord Roos to his lady. "Your mother needs no aid. She is perfectly well."

"Ay, well enough to confound you and all your wicked purposes, my lord," cried Lady Lake. "You have not accomplished my destruction, as you perceive; nor shall you accomplish your wife's destruction, though you have well-nigh succeeded. Let it chafe you to madness to learn that I possess an antidote which I have myself approved, and which will kill the poison circling in her veins, and give her new life."

"An antidote!" exclaimed Lord Roos. "So far from galling me to madness, the intelligence fills me with delight beyond expression. Give it me, madam, that I may administer it at once; and Heaven grant its results may be such as you predict!"

"Administered by you, my lord, it would be poison," said Lady Lake, bitterly. "But you may stand by and witness its beneficial effects. They will be instantaneous."

"As you will, madam, so you do not delay the application," cried Lord Roos.

"Drink of this, my child," said Lady Lake, after she had poured some drops of the cordial into a glass.

"I will take it from no hand but my husband's," murmured Lady Roos.

"How!" exclaimed her mother, frowning.

"Give it me, I say, madam," cried Lord Roos. "Is this a time for hesitation, when you see her life hangs upon a thread which you yourself may sever?"

And taking the glass from her, he held it to his wife's lips; tenderly supporting her while she swallowed its contents.

It was not long before the effects of the cordial were manifest. The deathly hue of the skin changed to a more healthful colour, and the pulsations of the heart became stronger and more equal; and though the debility could not be so speedily repaired, it was apparent that the work of restoration had commenced, and might be completed if the same treatment were pursued.

"Now I owe my life to you, my dear lord," said Lady Roos, regarding her husband with grateful fondness.

"To him!" exclaimed her mother. "You owe him nothing but a heavy debt of vengeance, which we will endeavour to pay, and with interest. But keep calm, my child, and do not trouble yourself, whatever may occur. Your speedy restoration will depend much on that."

"You do not adopt the means to make me calm, mother," replied Lady Roos.

But Lady Lake was too much bent upon the immediate and full gratification of her long-deferred vengeance to heed her. Clapping her hands together, the signal was answered by Sir Thomas Lake, who came forth from the adjoining room with Luke Hatton. At the same time, and as if it had been so contrived that all the guilty parties should be confronted together, the outer door of the chamber was opened, and the Countess of Exeter was ushered in by Sarah Swarton. On seeing in whose presence she stood, the Countess would have precipitately retreated; but it was too late. The door was closed by Sarah.

"Soh! my turn is come at last," cried Lady Lake, gazing from one to the other with a smile of gratified vengeance. "I hold you all in my toils. You, my lord," addressing her son-in-law, "have treated a wife, who has ever shown you the most devoted affection, with neglect and cruelty; and, not content with such barbarous treatment, have conspired against her life and against my life."

"Take heed how you bring any charge against him, mother," cried Lady Roos, raising herself in her couch. "Take heed, I say. Let your vengeance fall upon her head"—pointing to the Countess—"but not upon him."

"I am willing to make atonement for the wrongs I have done you, Lady Roos," said the Countess, "and have come hither to say so, and to implore your forgiveness."

"You fancied she was dying," rejoined Lady Lake—"dying from the effects of the poison administered to her and to me by Luke Hatton, according to your order; but you are mistaken,

Countess. We have found an antidote, and shall yet live to requite you."

"It is more satisfaction to me to be told this, madam, than it would be to find that Luke Hatton had succeeded in his design, which I would have prevented if I could," said Lady Exeter.

"You will gain little credit for that assertion, Countess," remarked Sir Thomas Lake, "since it is contradicted by an order which I hold in my hand, signed by yourself, and given to the miscreant in question."

"O Heavens!" ejaculated the Countess.

"Do you deny this signature?" asked Sir Thomas, showing her the paper.

Lady Exeter made no answer.

"Learn, further, to your confusion, Countess," pursued Lady Lake, "that the wretch, Luke Hatton, has made a full confession of his offence, wherein he declares that he was incited by you, and by you alone, on the offer of a large reward, to put my daughter and myself to death by slow poison."

"By me alone!—incited by me!" cried Lady Exeter; "why, I opposed him. It is impossible he can have confessed thus. Hast thou done so, villain?"

"I have," replied Luke Hatton, sullenly.

"Then thou hast avouched a lie—a lie that will damn thee," said Lady Exeter. "Lord Roos knows it to be false, and can exculpate me. Speak, my lord, I charge you, and say how it occurred?"

But the young nobleman remained silent.

"Not a word—not a word in my favour," the Countess exclaimed, in a voice of anguish. "Nay, then I am indeed lost!"

"You are lost past redemption," cried Lady Lake, with an outburst of fierce exultation, and a look as if she would have trampled her beneath her feet. "You have forfeited honour, station, life. Guilty of disloyalty to your proud and noble husband, you have sought to remove by violent deaths those who stood between you and your lover. Happily, your dreadful purpose has been defeated; but this avowal of your criminality with Lord Roos, signed by yourself and witnessed by his lordship and his Spanish servant—this shall be laid within an hour before the Earl of Exeter."

"My brain turns round. I am bewildered with all these frightful accusations," exclaimed the Countess, distractedly. "I have made no confession,—have signed none."

"Methought you said I had witnessed it, madam?" cried Lord Roos, almost as much bewildered as Lady Exeter.

"Will you deny your own handwriting, my lord?" rejoined Lady Lake; "or will the Countess? Behold the confession, subscribed by the one, and witnessed by the other."

"It is a forgery!" shrieked the Countess. "You have charged me with witchcraft, but you practise it yourself."

"If I did not know it to be false, I could have sworn the hand was yours, Countess," cried Lord Roos; "and my own signature is equally skilfully simulated."

"False or not," cried Lady Lake, "it shall be laid before Lord Exeter, as I have said—with all the details—ay, and before the King."

"Before the King!" repeated Lord Roos, as he drew near Lady Exeter, and whispered in her ear—"Countess, our sole safety is in immediate flight. Circumstances are so strong against us, that we shall never be able to disprove this forgery."

"Then save yourself in the way you propose, my lord," she rejoined, with scorn. "For me, I shall remain, and brave it out."

The young nobleman made a movement towards the door.

"You cannot go forth without my order, my lord," cried Sir Thomas Lake. "It is guarded."

"Perdition!" exclaimed Lord Roos.

"Again Lady Lake looked from one to the other with a smile of triumph. But it was presently checked by a look from her daughter, who made a sign to her to approach her.

"What would you, my child?—more of the cordial?" demanded Lady Lake.

"No, mother," she replied, in a tone so low as to be inaudible to the others. "Nor will I suffer another drop to pass my lips unless my husband be allowed to depart without molestation."

"Would you interfere with my vengeance?" said Lady Lake.

"Ay, mother; I will interfere with it effectually, unless you comply," rejoined Lady Roos, firmly. "I will acquaint the Countess with the true nature of that confession. "As it is, she has awakened by her conduct some feelings of pity in my breast."

"You will ruin all by your weakness," said Lady Lake.

"Let Lord Roos go free, and let there be a truce between you and the Countess for three days, and I am content."

"I do not like to give such a promise," said Lady Lake. "It will be hard to keep it."

"It may be harder to lose all your vengeance," rejoined Lady Roos, in a tone that showed she would not be opposed.

Compelled to succumb, Lady Lake moved towards Sir Thomas, and a few words having passed between them in private, the Secretary of State thus addressed his noble son-in-law—

"My lord," he said, in a grave tone, "at the instance of my daughter, though much against my own inclination, and that of my wife, I will no longer oppose your departure. I understand you are about to travel, and I therefore recommend you to set forth without delay; for if you be found in London, or in Eng-

land, after three days, during which time, at the desire also of our daughter—and equally against our own wishes—we consent to keep truce with my lady of Exeter: if, I say, you are found after that time, I will not answer for the consequences to yourself. Thus warned, my lord, you are at liberty to depart."

"I will take advantage of your offer, Sir Thomas, and attend to your hint," replied Lord Roos. And, turning upon his heel, he marched towards the door, whither he was accompanied by Sir Thomas Lake, who called to the attendants outside to let him go free.

"Not one word of farewell to me! not one look!" exclaimed his wife, sinking back upon the pillow.

"Nor for me—and I shall see him no more," murmured the Countess, compressing her beautiful lips. "But it is better thus."

While this was passing, Luke Hatton had contrived to approach the Countess, and now said, in a low tone, "If your ladyship will trust to me, and make it worth my while, I will deliver you from the peril in which you are placed by this confession. Shall I come to Exeter House to-night?"

She consented.

"At what hour?"

"At midnight," she returned. "I loathe thee, yet have no alternative but to trust thee. Am I free to depart likewise?" she added aloud to Sir Thomas.

"The door is open for you, Countess," rejoined the Secretary of State, with mock ceremoniousness. "After three days, you understand, war is renewed between us."

"War to the death," subjoined Lady Lake.

"Be it so," replied the Countess. "I shall not desert my post."

And assuming the dignified deportment for which she was remarkable, she went forth with a slow and majestic step.

Luke Hatton would have followed her, but Sir Thomas detained him.

"Am I a prisoner?" he said, uneasily, and glancing at Lady Lake. "Her ladyship promised me instant liberation."

"And the promise shall be fulfilled as soon as I am satisfied my daughter is out of danger," returned Sir Thomas.

"I am easy, then," said the apothecary. "I will answer for her speedy recovery."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A VISIT TO SIR GILES MOMPESSON'S HABITATION, NEAR THE FLEET.

Allowing an interval of three or four months to elapse between the events last recorded and those about to be narrated, we shall now conduct the reader to a large, gloomy habitation near Fleet Bridge. At first view, this structure, with its stone walls, corner turrets, ponderous door, and barred windows, might be taken as part and parcel of the ancient prison existing in this locality. Such, however, was not the fact. The little river Fleet, whose muddy current was at that time open to view, flowed between the two buildings; and the grim and frowning mansion we propose to describe stood on the western bank, exactly opposite the gateway of the prison.

Now, as no one had a stronger interest in the Fleet Prison than the owner of that gloomy house, inasmuch as he had lodged more persons within it than any one ever did before him, it would almost seem that he had selected his abode for the purpose of watching over the safe custody of the numerous victims of his rapacity and tyranny. This was the general surmise; and, it must be owned, there was ample warranty for it in his conduct.

A loop-hole in the turret at the north-east angle of the house commanded the courts of the prison, and here Sir Giles Mompesson would frequently station himself to note what was going forward within the jail, and examine the looks and deportment of those kept by him in durance. Many a glance of hatred and defiance was thrown from these sombre courts at the narrow aperture at which he was known to place himself; but such regards only excited Sir Giles's derision: many an imploring gesture was made to him; but these entreaties for compassion were equally disregarded. Being a particular friend of the Warden of the Fleet, and the jailers obeying him as they would have done their principal, he entered the prison when he pleased, and visited any ward he chose, at any hour of day or night; and though the unfortunate prisoners complained of the annoyance —and especially those to whom his presence was obnoxious— no redress could be obtained. He always appeared when least expected, and seemed to take a malicious pleasure in troubling those most anxious to avoid him.

Nor was Sir Giles the only visitant to the prison. Clement Lanyere was as frequently to be seen within its courts and wards as his master, and a similar understanding appeared to exist between him and the jailers. Hence, he was nearly as much an object of dread and dislike as Sir Giles himself, and few saw the masked and shrouded figure of the spy approach them without misgiving.

From the strange and unwarrantable influence exercised by Sir Giles and the promoter in the prison, they came at length to be considered as part of it; and matters were as frequently referred to them by the subordinate officers as to the warden. It was even supposed by some of the prisoners that a secret means of communication must exist between Sir Giles's habitation and the jail; but as both he and Lanyere possessed keys of the wicket, such a contrivance was obviously unnecessary, and would have been dangerous, as it must have been found out at some time by those interested in the discovery.

It has been shown, however, that, in one way or other, Sir Giles had nearly as much to do with the management of the Fleet Prison as those to whom its governance was ostensibly committed, and that he could, if he thought proper, aggravate the sufferings of its unfortunate occupants without incurring any responsibility for his treatment of them. He looked upon the Star-Chamber and the Fleet as the means by which he could plunder society and stifle the cry of the oppressed; and it was his business to see that both machines were kept in good order, and worked well.

But to return to his habitation. Its internal appearance corresponded with its forbidding exterior. The apartments were large, but cold and comfortless, and, with two or three exceptions, scantily furnished. Sumptuously decorated, these exceptional rooms presented a striking contrast to the rest of the house; but they were never opened, except on the occasion of some grand entertainment—a circumstance of rare occurrence. There was a large hall of entrance, where Sir Giles's myrmidons were wont to assemble, with a great table in the midst of it, on which no victuals were ever placed—at least at the extortioner's expense—and a great fire-place, where no fire ever burnt. From this a broad stone staircase mounted to the upper part of the house, and communicated by means of dusky corridors and narrow passages with the various apartments. A turnpike staircase connected the turret to which Sir Giles used to resort to reconnoitre the Fleet Prison, with the lower part of the habitation, and similar cork-screw stairs existed in the other angles of the structure. When stationed at the loophole, little recked Sir Giles of the mighty cathedral that frowned upon him like the offended eye of Heaven. His gaze was seldom raised towards Saint Paul's, or if it were, he had no perception of the beauty or majesty of the ancient cathedral. The object of interest was immediately below him. The sternest realities of life were what he dealt with. He had no taste for the sublime or the beautiful.

Sir Giles had just paid an inquisitorial visit, such as we have described, to the prison, and was returning homewards over Fleet Bridge, when he encountered Sir Francis Mitchell, who was coming in quest of him, and they proceeded to his habitation

together. Nothing beyond a slight greeting passed between them in the street, for Sir Giles was ever jealous of his slightest word being overheard: but he could see from his partner's manner that something had occurred to annoy and irritate him greatly. Sir Giles was in no respect changed since the reader last beheld him. Habited in the same suit of sables, he still wore the same mantle, and the same plumed hat, and had the same long rapier by his side. His deportment, too, was as commanding as before, and his aspect as stern and menacing.

Sir Francis, however, had not escaped the consequences naturally to be expected from the punishment inflicted upon him by the apprentices, being so rheumatic that he could scarcely walk, while a violent cough, with which he was occasionally seized, and which took its date from the disastrous day referred to and had never left him since, threatened to shake his feeble frame in pieces; this, added to the exasperation under which he was evidently labouring, was almost too much for him. Three months seemed to have placed as many years upon his head; or, at all events, to have taken a vast deal out of his constitution. But, notwithstanding his increased infirmities, and utter unfitness for the part he attempted to play, he still affected a youthful air, and still aped all the extravagances and absurdities in dress and manner of the gayest and youngest court coxcomb. He was still attired in silks and satins of the gaudiest hues, still carefully trimmed as to hair and beard, still redolent of perfumes.

Not without exhibiting considerable impatience, Sir Giles was obliged to regulate his pace by the slow and tottering steps of his companion, and was more than once brought to a halt as the lungs of the latter were convulsively torn by his cough, but at last they reached the house, and entered the great hall, where the myrmidons were assembled—all of whom rose on their appearance, and saluted them. There was Captain Bludder, with his braggart air, attended by some half-dozen Alsatian bullies; Lupo Vulp, with his crafty looks; and the tipstaves—all, in short, were present, excepting Clement Lanyere, and Sir Giles knew how to account for his absence. To the inquiries of Captain Bludder and his associates, whether they were likely to be required on any business that day, Sir Giles gave a doubtful answer, and placing some pieces of money in the Alsatian's hand, bade him repair, with his followers, to the "Rose Tavern," in Hanging-Sword Court, and crush a flask or two of wine, and then return for orders—an injunction with which the captain willingly complied. To the tipstaves Sir Giles made no observation, and bidding Lupo Vulp hold himself in readiness for a summons, he passed on with his partner to an inner apartment. On Sir Francis gaining it, he sank into a chair, and was again seized with a fit of coughing that threatened him with annihilation. When it ceased, he made an effort to commence the con-

versation, and Sir Giles, who had been pacing to and fro impatiently within the chamber, stopped to listen to him.

"You will wonder what business has brought me hither to-day, Sir Giles," he said; "and I will keep you no longer in suspense. I have been insulted, Sir Giles—grievously insulted."

"By whom?" demanded the extortioner.

"By Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey," replied Sir Francis, shaking with passion. "I have received a degrading insult from him to-day, which ought to be washed out with his blood."

"What hath he done to you?" inquired the other.

"I will tell you, Sir Giles. I chanced to see him in the court-yard of the palace of Whitehall, and there being several gallants nigh at hand, who I thought would take my part—ough! ough! what a plaguey cough I have gotten, to be sure; but 'tis all owing to those cursed 'prentices—a murrain seize 'em. Your patience, sweet Sir Giles, I am coming to the point—ough! ough! there, it takes me again. Well, as I was saying, thinking the gallants with whom I was conversing would back me, and perceiving Mounchensey approach us, I thought I might venture—"

"Venture!" repeated Sir Giles, scornfully. "Let not such a disgraceful word pass your lips."

"I mean, I thought I might take occasion to affront him. Whereupon I cocked my hat fiercely, as I have seen you and Captain Bludder do, Sir Giles."

"Couple me not with the Alsatian, I pray of you, Sir Francis," observed the extortioner, sharply.

"Your pardon, Sir Giles—your pardon! But as I was saying, I regarded him with a scowl, and tapped the hilt of my sword. And what think you the ruffianly fellow did? I almost blush at the bare relation of it. Firstly, he plucked off my hat, telling me I ought to stand bareheaded in the presence of gentlemen. Next, he tweaked my nose, and as I turned round to avoid him, he applied his foot—yes, his foot—to the back of my trunk-hose: and well was it that the hose were stoutly wadded and quilted. Fire and fury! Sir Giles, I cannot brook the indignity. And what was worse, the shameless gallants, who ought to have lent me aid, were ready to split their sides with laughter, and declared I had only gotten my due. When I could find utterance for very choler, I told the villain you would requite him, and he answered he would serve you in the same fashion, whenever you crossed his path."

"Ha! said he so?" cried Sir Giles, half drawing his sword, while his eyes flashed fire. "We shall see whether he will make good his words. Yet no! Revenge must not be accomplished in that way. I have already told you I am willing to let him pursue his present career undisturbed for a time, in order to make his fall the greater. I hold him in my hand, and can crush him when I please."

"Then do not defer your purpose, Sir Giles," said Sir Francis; "or I must take my own means of setting myself right with him. I cannot consent to sit down calmly under the provocation I have endured."

"And what will be the momentary gratification afforded by his death—if such you meditate," returned Sir Giles, "in comparison with hurling him down from the point he has gained, stripping him of all his honours, and of such wealth as he may have acquired, and plunging him into the Fleet Prison, where he will die by inches, and where you yourself may feast your eyes on his slow agonies? That is true revenge; and you are but a novice in the art of vengeance if you think your plan equal to mine. It is for this—and this only—that I have spared him so long. I have suffered him to puff himself up with pride and insolence, till he is ready to burst. But his day of reckoning is at hand, and then he shall pay off the long arrears he owes us."

"Well, Sir Giles, I am willing to leave the matter with you," said Sir Francis; "but it is hard to be publicly insulted, and have injurious epithets applied to you, and not obtain immediate redress."

"I grant you it is so," rejoined Sir Giles; "but you well know you are no match for him at the sword."

"If I am not, others are—Clement Lanyere, for instance," cried Sir Francis. "He has more than once arranged a quarrel for me."

"And were it an ordinary case, I would advise that the arrangement of this quarrel should be left to Lanyere," said Sir Giles; "or I myself would undertake it for you. But that were only half revenge. No; the work must be done completely; and the triumph you will gain in the end will amply compensate you for the delay."

"Be it so, then," replied Sir Francis. "But before I quit the subject, I may remark, that one thing perplexes me in the sudden rise of this upstart, and that is, that he encounters no opposition from Buckingham. Even the King, I am told, has expressed his surprise that the jealous Marquis should view one who may turn out a rival with so much apparent complacency."

"It is because Buckingham has no fear of him," replied Sir Giles. "He knows he has but to say the word, and the puppet brought forward by De Gondomar—for it is by him that Mounchensey is supported—will be instantly removed; but as he also knows that another would be set up, he is content to let him occupy the place for a time."

"Certes, if Mounchensey had more knowledge of the world, he would distrust him," said Sir Francis; "because, in my opinion, Buckingham overacts his part, and shows him too much attention He invites him, as I am given to understand, to all his masques, banquets, and revels at York House, and even condescends to

flatter him. Such conduct would awaken suspicion in any one save the object of it."

"I have told you Buckingham's motive, and therefore his conduct will no longer surprise you. Have you heard of the wager between De Gondomar and the Marquis, in consequence of which a trial of skill is to be made in the Tilt-yard to-morrow? Mounchensey is to run against Buckingham, and I leave you to guess what the result will be. I myself am to be among the jousters."

"You!" exclaimed Sir Francis.

"Even I," replied Sir Giles, with a smile of gratified vanity. "Now, mark me, Sir Francis. I have a surprise for you. It is not enough for me to hurl this aspiring youth from his proud position, and cover him with disgrace—it is not enough to immure him in the Fleet; but I will deprive him of his choicest treasure—of the object of his devoted affections."

"Ay, indeed!" exclaimed Sir Francis.

"By my directions Clement Lanyere has kept constant watch over him, and has discovered that the young man's heart is fixed upon a maiden of great beauty, named Aveline Calveley, daughter of the crazy Puritan who threatened the King's life some three or four months ago at Theobalds."

"I mind me of the circumstance," observed Sir Francis.

"This maiden lives in great seclusion with an elderly dame, but I have found out her retreat. I have said that Sir Jocelyn is enamoured of her, and she is by no means insensible to his passion. But a bar exists to their happiness. Almost with his last breath, a promise was extorted from his daughter by Hugh Calveley, that if her hand should be claimed within a year by one to whom he had engaged her, but with whose name even she was wholly unacquainted, she would unhesitatingly give it to him."

"And will the claim be made?"

"It will."

"And think you she will fulfil her promise?"

"I am sure of it. A dying father's commands are sacred with one like her."

"Have you seen her, Sir Giles? Is she so very beautiful as represented?"

"I have not yet seen her; but she will be here anon. And you can then judge for yourself."

"She here!" exclaimed Sir Francis. "By what magic will you bring her hither?"

"By a spell that cannot fail in effect," replied Sir Giles, with a grim smile. "I have summoned her in her father's name. I have sent for her to tell her that her hand will be claimed."

"By whom?" inquired Sir Francis.

"That is my secret," replied Sir Giles.

At this juncture there was a tap at the door, and, Sir Giles telling the person without to enter, it was opened by Clement Lanyere, wrapped in his long mantle, and with his countenance hidden by his mask.

"They are here," he said.

"The damsel and the elderly female?" cried Sir Giles.

And receiving a response in the affirmative from the promoter, he bade him usher them in at once.

The next moment Aveline, attended by a decent-looking woman, somewhat stricken in years, entered the room. They were followed by Clement Lanyere. The maiden was attired in deep mourning, and though looking very pale, her surpassing beauty produced a strong impression upon Sir Francis Mitchell, who instantly arose on seeing her, and made her a profound, and, as he considered, courtly salutation.

Without bestowing any attention on him, Aveline addressed herself to Sir Giles, whose look filled her with terror.

"Why have you sent for me, sir?" she demanded.

"I have sent for you, Aveline Calveley, to remind you of the promise made by you to your dying father," he rejoined.

"Ah!" she exclaimed; "then my forebodings of ill are realized."

"I know you consider that promise binding," pursued Sir Giles; "and it is only necessary for me to announce to you that, in a week from this time, your hand will be claimed in marriage."

"Alas! alas!" she cried, in accents of despair. "But who will claim it?—and how can the claim be substantiated?" she added, recovering herself in some degree.

"You will learn at the time I have appointed," replied Sir Giles. "And now, having given you notice to prepare for the fulfilment of an engagement solemnly contracted by your father, and as solemnly agreed to by yourself, I will no longer detain you."

Aveline gazed at him with wonder and terror, and would have sought for some further explanation; but perceiving from the inflexible expression of his countenance that any appeal would be useless, she quitted the room with her companion.

"I would give half I possess to make that maiden mine," cried Sir Francis, intoxicated with admiration of her beauty.

"Hump!" exclaimed Sir Giles. "More difficult matters have been accomplished. Half your possessions, say you? She is not worth so much. As sign to me your share of the Mounchensey estates and she shall be yours."

"I will do it, Sir Giles—I will do it," cried the old usurer, eagerly; "but you must prove to me first that you can make good your words."

"Pshaw! Have I ever deceived you, man? But rest easy You shall be fully satisfied."

"Then call in Lupo Vulp, and let him prepare the assignment at once," cried Sir Francis. "I shall have a rare prize; and shall effectually revenge myself on this detested Mounchensey."

CHAPTER XXXV.

OF THE WAGER BETWEEN THE CONDE DE GONDOMAR AND THE MARQUIS OF BUCKINGHAM.

At a banquet given at Whitehall, attended by all the principal lords and ladies of the court, a wager was laid between the Conde de Gondomar and the Marquis of Buckingham, the decision of which was referred to the King.

The circumstance occurred in this way. The discourse happened to turn upon jousting, and the magnificent favourite, who was held unrivalled in all martial exercises and chivalrous sports, and who, confident in his own skill, vauntingly declared that he had never met his match in the tilt-yard; whereupon the Spanish Ambassador, willing to lower his pride, immediately rejoined, that he could, upon the instant, produce a better man-at-arms than he; and so certain was he of being able to make good his words, that he was willing to stake a thousand doubloons to a hundred on the issue of a trial.

To this Buckingham haughtily replied, that he at once accepted the Ambassador's challenge; but in regard to the terms of the wager, they must be somewhat modified, as he could not accept them as proposed; but he was willing to hazard on the result of the encounter all the gems with which at the moment his habiliments were covered against the single diamond clasp worn by De Gondomar; and if the offer suited his Excellency, he had nothing to do but appoint the day and bring forward the man.

De Gondomar replied, that nothing could please him better than the Marquis's modification of the wager, and the proposal was quite consistent with the acknowledged magnificence of his Lordship's notions; yet he begged to make one further alteration, which was, that in the event of the knight he should nominate being adjudged by his Majesty to be the best jouster, the rich prize might be delivered to him.

Buckingham assented, and the terms of the wager being now fully settled, it only remained to fix the day for the trial, and this was referred to the King, who appointed the following Thursday—thus allowing, as the banquet took place on a Friday, nearly a week for preparation.

James, also, good-naturedly complied with the Ambassador's request, and agreed to act as judge on the occasion; and he laughingly remarked to Buckingham—"Ye are demented, Steenie,

to risk a' those precious stanes with which ye are bedecked on the skill with which ye can yield a frail lance. We may say unto you now, in the words of the poet,

'Pendebant tereti gemmata monilia collo;'

but wha shall say frae whose round throat those gemmed collars and glittering ouches will hang a week hence, if ye be worsted? Think of that, my dear dog."

"Your Majesty need be under no apprehension," replied Buckingham. "I shall win and wear his Excellency's diamond clasp. And now, perhaps the Count will make us acquainted with the name and title of my puissant adversary, on whose address he so much relies. Our relative chances of success will then be more apparent. If, however, any motive for secrecy exist, I will not press the inquiry, but leave the disclosure to a more convenient season."

"*Nunc est narrandi tempus*," rejoined the King. "No time like the present. We are anxious to ken wha the hero may be."

"I will not keep your Majesty a moment in suspense," said De Gondomar. "The young knight whom I design to select as the Marquis's opponent, and whom I am sure will feel grateful for having such means of honourable distinction afforded him, is present at the banquet."

"Here!" exclaimed James, looking round. "To whom do you refer, Count? It cannot be Sir Gilbert Gerrard, or Sir Henry Rich; for—without saying aught in disparagement of their prowess—neither of them is a match for Buckingham! Ah! save us! We hae it. Ye mean Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey."

And as the Ambassador acknowledged that his Majesty was right, all eyes were turned towards the young knight, who, though as much surprised as any one else, could not help feeling greatly elated.

"Aweel, Count," said James, evidently pleased, "ye might hae made a waur choice—that we are free to confess. We begin to tremble for your braw jewels, Steenie."

"They are safer than I expected," replied Buckingham, disdainfully. But though he thus laughed it off, it was evident he was displeased, and he muttered to his confidential friend, Lord Mordaunt,—"I see through it all: this is a concerted scheme to bring this aspiring galliard forward; but he shall receive a lesson for his presumption he shall not easily forget, while at the same time, those who make use of him for their own purposes shall be taught the risk they incur in daring to oppose me. The present opportunity shall not be neglected."

Having formed this resolution, Buckingham, to all appearance, entirely recovered his gaiety, and pressed the King to give importance to the trial by allowing it to take place in the royal tilt-yard at Whitehall, and to extend the number of jousters to

fourteen—seven on one side, and seven on the other. The request was readily granted by the Monarch, who appeared to take a stronger interest in the match than Buckingham altogether liked, and confirmed him in his determination of ridding himself for ever of the obstacle in his path presented by Mounchensey. The number of jousters being agreed upon, it was next decided that the party with whom Buckingham was to range should be headed by the Duke of Lennox; while Mounchensey's party was to be under the command of Prince Charles; and though the disposition was too flattering to his adversary to be altogether agreeable to the haughty favourite, he could not raise any reasonable objection to it, and was therefore obliged to submit with the best grace he could.

The two parties were then distributed in the following order by the King:—On the side of the Duke of Lennox, besides Buckingham himself, were the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke, and the Lords Clifford and Mordaunt; and while the King was hesitating as to the seventh, Sir Giles Mompesson was suggested by the Marquis, and James, willing to oblige his favourite, adopted the proposition. On the side of Prince Charles were ranked the Marquis of Hamilton, the Earls of Montgomery, Rutland, and Dorset, Lord Walden, and, of course, Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey. These preliminaries being fully adjusted, other topics were started, and the carouse, which had been in some degree interrupted, was renewed, and continued, with the entertainments that succeeded it, till past midnight.

Not a little elated by the high compliment paid to his prowess by the Spanish Ambassador, and burning to break a lance with Buckingham, Sir Jocelyn resolved to distinguish himself at the trial. Good luck, of late, had invariably attended him. Within the last few weeks he had been appointed one of the Gentlemen of his Majesty's Bed-chamber; and this was looked upon as the stepping-stone to some more exalted post. Supported by the influence of De Gondomar, and upheld by his own personal merits, which by this time, in spite of all hostility towards him, had begun to be appreciated; with the King himself most favourably inclined towards him, and Prince Charles amicably disposed; with many of the courtiers proffering him service, who were anxious to throw off their forced allegiance to the overweening favourite, and substitute another in his stead: with all these advantages, it is not to be wondered at, that in a short space of time he should have established a firm footing on that smooth and treacherous surface, the pavement of a palace, and have already become an object of envy and jealousy to many, and of admiration to a few.

Possessing the faculty of adapting himself to circumstances, Sir Jocelyn conducted himself with rare discretion; and while avoiding giving offence, never suffered a liberty to be taken with

himself; and having on the onset established a character for courage, he was little afterwards molested. It was creditable to him, that in a court where morality was at so low an ebb as that of James I., he should have remained uncorrupted; and that not all the allurements of the numerous beauties by whom he was surrounded, and who exerted their blandishments to ensnare him, could tempt him to a moment's disloyalty to the object of his affections. It was creditable, that at the frequent orgies he was compelled to attend, where sobriety was derided, and revelry pushed to its furthest limits, he was never on any occasion carried beyond the bounds of discretion. It was still more creditable to him, that in such venal and corrupt days he maintained his integrity perfectly unsullied. Thus severely tested, the true worth of his character was proved, and he came from the ordeal without a blemish.

The many excellent qualities that distinguished the newly-made knight and gentleman of the bed-chamber, combined with his remarkable personal advantages and conciliatory manner, considerably improved by the polish he had recently acquired, drew, as we have intimated, the attention of the second personage in the kingdom towards him. Struck by his manner, and by the sentiments he expressed, Prince Charles took frequent opportunities of conversing with him, and might have conceived a regard for him but for the jealous interference of Buckingham, who, unable to brook a rival either with the King or Prince, secretly endeavoured to set both against him. Such, however, was Sir Jocelyn's consistency of character, such his solidity of judgment and firmness, and such the respect he inspired, that he seemed likely to triumph over all the insidious snares planned for him. Things were in this state when the trial of skill in jousting was proposed by De Gondomar. The wily Ambassador might have —and probably had—some secret motive in making the proposal; but, whatever it was, it was unknown to his *protégé*.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A CLOUD IN THE HORIZON.

But it must not be imagined that Sir Jocelyn's whole time was passed in attendance on the Court. Not a day flew by that he did not pay a visit to Aveline. She had taken a little cottage, where she dwelt in perfect seclusion, with one female attendant, old Dame Sherbourne,—the same who had accompanied her on her compulsory visit to Sir Giles Mompesson,—and her father's faithful old servant, Anthony Rocke. To this retreat, situated in the then rural neighbourhood adjoining Holborn, Sir Jocelyn,

as we have said, daily repaired, and the moments so spent were the most delicious of his life. The feelings of regard entertained for him from the first by Aveline, had by this time ripened into love; yet, mindful of her solemn promise to her father, she checked her growing affection as much as lay in her power, and would not, at first, permit any words of tenderness to be uttered by him. As weeks, however, and even months, ran on, and no one appeared to claim her hand, she began to indulge the hope that the year of probation would expire without molestation; and insensibly, and almost before she was aware of it, Sir Jocelyn had become complete master of her heart. In these interviews, he told her all that occurred to him at court—acquainted her of his hopes of aggrandisement—and induced her to listen to his expectations of a brilliant future, to be shared by them together.

The severe shock Aveline had sustained in the death of her father had gradually worn away, and, if not free from occasional depression, she was still enabled to take a more cheerful view of things. Never had she seen Sir Jocelyn so full of ardour as on the day after the banquet, when he came to communicate the intelligence of the jousts, and that he was selected to essay his skill against that of Buckingham. The news, however, did not produce upon her the effect he expected. Not only she could not share his delight, but she was seized with anticipations of coming ill, in connexion with this event, for which she could not account. Nor could all that Jocelyn said remove her misgivings; and, in consequence, their meeting was sadder than usual.

On the next day, these forebodings of impending calamity were most unexpectedly realized. A mysterious personage, wrapped in a long black cloak, and wearing a mask, entered her dwelling without standing upon the ceremony of tapping at the door. His presence occasioned her much alarm, and it was not diminished when he told her, in a stern and peremptory tone, that she must accompany him to Sir Giles Mompesson's habitation. Refusing to give any explanation of the cause of this strange summons, he said she would do well to comply with it, that, indeed, resistance would be idle, as Sir Giles was prepared to enforce his orders; and that he himself would be responsible for her safety. Compelled to be satisfied with these assurances, Aveline yielded to the apparent necessity of the case, and set forth with him, attended by Dame Sherbourne. With what passed during her interview with the extortioner the reader is already acquainted. She had anticipated something dreadful; but the reality almost exceeded her anticipations. So overpowered was she by the painful intelligence, that it was with difficulty she reached home; and the rest of the day was occupied with anxious reflection. Evening as usual brought her lover. She met him at the door, where he tied his horse, and they

entered the little dwelling together. The shades of night were coming on apace, and in consequence of the gloom he did not remark the traces of distress on her countenance, but went on with the theme uppermost in his mind.

"I know you have ever avoided shows and triumphs," he said; "but I wish I could induce you to make an exception in favour of this tilting-match, and consent to be present at it. The thought that you were looking on would nerve my arm, and make me certain of success."

"Even if I would, I cannot comply with your request," she replied, in an agitated tone. "Prepare yourself, Jocelyn. I have bad news for you."

He started; and the vision of delight, in which he had been indulging, vanished at once.

"The worst news you could have to tell me would be that the claim had been made," he observed. "I trust it is not that?"

"It is better to know the worst at once. I have received undoubted information that the claim *will* be made."

A cry of anguish escaped Sir Jocelyn, as if a severe blow had been dealt him—and he could scarcely articulate the inquiry, "By whom?"

"That I know not," she rejoined. "But the ill tidings have been communicated to me by Sir Giles Mompesson."

"Sir Giles Mompesson!" exclaimed Sir Jocelyn, scarcely able to credit what he heard. "Your father would never have surrendered you to him. It is impossible he could have made any compact with such a villain."

"I do not say that he did; and if he had done so, I would die a thousand deaths, and incur all the penalties attached to the sin of disobedience, rather than fulfil it. Sir Giles is merely the mouthpiece of another, who will not disclose himself till he appears to exact fulfilment of the fatal pledge."

"But, be it whomsoever it may, the claim never can be granted," cried Sir Jocelyn, in a voice of agony. "You will not consent to be bound by such a contract. You will not thus sacrifice yourself. It is out of all reason. Your father's promise cannot bind you. He had no right to destroy his child. Will you listen to my counsel, Aveline?" he continued, vehemently. "You have received this warning; and though it is not likely to have been given with any very friendly design, still you may take advantage of it, and avoid by flight the danger to which you are exposed."

"Impossible!" she answered. "I could not reconcile such a course to my conscience, or to my reverence for my father's memory."

"There is still another course open to you," he pursued, "if you choose to adopt it; and that is, to take a step which shall make the fulfilment of this promise impossible"

"I understand you," she replied; "but that is equally out of the question. Often and often have I thought over this matter, and with much uneasiness; but I cannot relieve myself of the obligation imposed upon me."

"O Aveline!" cried Sir Jocelyn. "If you allow yourself, by any fancied scruples, to be forced into a marriage repugnant to your feelings, you will condemn both yourself and me to misery."

"I know it—I feel it; and yet there is no escape," she cried. "Were I to act on your suggestions, and fly from this threatened danger, or remove it altogether by a marriage with you—were I to disobey my father, I should never know a moment's peace."

There was a brief pause, interrupted only by her sobs. At length Sir Jocelyn exclaimed, quickly,

"Perhaps we may be unnecessarily alarming ourselves, and this may only be a trick of Sir Giles Mompesson. He may have heard of the promise you have made to your father, and may try to frighten you. But whoever is put forward must substantiate his claim."

As those words were uttered, there was a slight noise in the apartment; and, looking up, they beheld the dusky figure of Clement Lanyere, masked and cloaked, as was his wont, standing beside them.

"You here?" cried Sir Jocelyn, in astonishment.

"Ay," replied the promoter; "I am come to tell you that this is no idle fear—that the claim *will* be made, and *will* be substantiated."

"Ah!" exclaimed Aveline, in a tone of anguish.

"You will not seek to evade it, I know, young mistress," replied the promoter; "and therefore, as you have truly said, there is no escape."

"Only let me know the claimant's name," cried Sir Jocelyn, and I will engage he shall never fulfil his design."

"O no; this must not be—you must not resort to violence," said Aveline. "I will never consent to owe my deliverance to such means."

"You shall have all the information you require after the jousts on Thursday," said Lanyere; "and let the thought strengthen your arm in the strife, for if you fail, Aveline Calveley will have no protector in the hour of need."

With this, he departed as suddenly and mysteriously as he had come.

SIR GILES MOMPESSON AND THE APPRENTICE.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHITEHALL.

The Tilt-yard at Whitehall, where the jousting was appointed to take place, was situated on the westerly side of the large area in front of the old Banqueting-House (destroyed by fire soon after the date of this history, and replaced by the stately structure planned by Inigo Jones, still existing), and formed part of a long range of buildings appertaining to the palace, and running parallel with it in a northerly direction from Westminster, devoted to purposes of exercise and recreation, and including the Tennis-court, the Bowling-alley, the Manége, and the Cock-pit.

A succession of brick walls, of various heights, and surmounted by roofs of various forms and sizes, marked the position of these buildings, in reference to Saint James's Park, which they skirted on the side next to King Street. They were mainly, if not entirely erected, in 1532, by Henry VIII., when, after his acquisition from Wolsey, by forfeiture, of Whitehall, he obtained by exchange, from the Abbot and Convent of Westminster, all their uninclosed land contiguous to his newly-acquired palace, and immediately fenced it round, and converted it into a park.

To a monarch so fond of robust sports and manly exercises of all kinds as our bluff Harry, a tilt-yard was indispensable; and he erected one on a grand scale, and made it a place of constant resort. Causing a space of one hundred and fifty yards in length and fifty in width to be inclosed and encircled by lofty walls, he fixed against the inner side large scaffolds, containing two tiers of seats, partitioned from each other like boxes in a theatre, for the accommodation of spectators. At the southern extremity of the inclosure he reared a magnificent gallery, which he set apart for his consort and the ladies in attendance upon her. This was decorated with velvet, and hung with curtains of cloth of gold. On grand occasions, when all the Court was present, the whole of the seats on the scaffolds, previously described, were filled with bright eyed beauties, whose looks and plaudits stimulated to deeds of high emprise the knights, who styled themselves their "servants," and besought "favours" from them in the shape of a scarf, a veil, a sleeve, a bracelet, a ringlet, or a knot of ribands. At such times Henry himself would enter the lists; and, in his earlier days, and before he became too unwieldy for active exertion, no ruder antagonist with the lance or sword could be found than he. Men, indeed, existed in his days, very different in hardihood of frame and personal strength from the silken sybarites, enervated by constant riot and dissipation, who aped the deeds of arms of their grandfathers in the time of James the First.

But the tilt-yard was by no means neglected by Elizabeth. This lion-hearted queen encouraged a taste for chivalrous displays,

and took almost as much delight in such exhibitions as her stalwart sire. During her long reign no festivity was thought complete unless jousting was performed. The name of the gallant Sir Philip Sidney need only be mentioned, to show that she possessed at least one perfect "mirror of chivalry" amongst her courtiers; but her chief favourites, Essex and Leicester, were both distinguished for knightly prowess. Many a lance was splintered by them in her honour. When the French Embassy arrived in London to treat of a marriage between Elizabeth and the Duc d'Anjou, and when a grand temporary banqueting-house, three hundred and thirty feet long, and covered with canvas, was improvised for the occasion, a magnificent tournament was given in the tilt-yard in honour of the distinguished visitors. Old Holinshed tells us, that—"the gallery or place at the end of the tilt-yard, adjoining to her Majesty's house at Whitehall, where, as her person should be placed, was called, and not without cause, the Castle or Fortress of Perfect Beauty, for as much as her highness should be there included." And he also gives a curious description of the framework used by the besiegers of the fortress. "They had provided," he says, "a frame of wood, which was covered with canvas, and painted outwardly in such excellent order, as if it had been very natural earth or mould, and carried the name of a rolling-trench, which went on wheels which way soever the persons within did drive it. Upon the top thereof were placed two cannons of wood, so passing well coloured, as they seemed to be, indeed, two fair field-pieces of ordnance; and by them were placed two men for gunners, clothed in crimson sarcenet, with their baskets of earth for defence of their bodies by them. And also there stood on the top of the trench an ensign-bearer, in the same suit with the gunners, displaying his ensign, and within the said trench was cunningly conveyed divers kinds of most excellent music against the Castle of Beauty. These things thus all in readiness, the challengers approached, and came down the stable toward the tilt-yard." The challengers were the Earl of Arundel, Lord Windsor, Sir Philip Sidney, and Sir Fulke Greville; and the defenders were very numerous, and amongst them was the doughty Sir Harry Lee, who, as the "unknown knight," broke "six staves right valiantly." All the speeches made by the challengers and defenders are reported by Holinshed, who thus winds up his description of the first day's triumph:—"These speeches being ended, both they and the rest marched about the tilt-yard, and so going back to the nether end thereof, prepared themselves to run, every one in his turn, each defendant six courses against the former challengers, who performed their parts so valiantly on both sides, that their prowess hath demerited perpetual memory, and worthily won honour, both to themselves and their native country, as fame hath the same reported." And of the second day he thus writes:—"Then went they to the tourney, where they did very nobly, as the

shivering of the swords might very well testify: and after that to the barriers, where they lashed it out lustily, and fought courageously, as if the Greeks and Trojans had dealt their deadly dole. No party was spared, no estate excepted, but each knight endeavoured to win the golden fleece that expected either fame or the favour of his mistress, which sport continued all the same day." These pageantries were of frequent occurrence, and the pages of the picturesque old chronicler above cited abound with descriptions of them. Yet, in spite of the efforts of Elizabeth to maintain its splendour undiminished, the star of chivalry was rapidly declining, to disappear for ever in the reign of her successor.

The glitter of burnished steel, the clash of arms, the rude encounter, and all other circumstances attendant upon the arena of martial sport, that had given so much delight to his predecessors, afforded little pleasure to James; as how should they, to a prince whose constitutional timidity was so great that he shuddered at the sight of a drawn sword, and abhorred the mimic representations of warfare! Neither were the rigorous principles of honour on which chivalry was based, nor the obligations they imposed, better suited to him. Too faithless by nature to adopt the laws of a Court of Honour, he derided the institution as obsolete. Nevertheless, as trials of skill and strength in the tilt-yard were still in fashion, he was compelled, though against his inclination, to witness them, and in some degree to promote them. The day of his accession to the throne—the 24th March—was always celebrated by tilting and running at the ring; and similar displays were invariably made in honour of any important visitor to the Court.

Even in this reign, something of a revival of the ancient ardour for knightly pastimes took place during the brief career of Prince Henry, who, if he had lived to fulfil the promise of his youth, would have occupied a glorious page in his country's annals, and have saved it, in all probability, from its subsequent convulsions and intestine strife. Inuring himself betimes to the weight of armour, this young prince became exceedingly expert in the use of all weapons—could toss the pike, couch the lance, and wield the sword, the battle-axe, or the mace, better than any one of his years. The tilt-yard and the tennis-court were his constant places of resort, and he was ever engaged in robust exercises—too much so, indeed, for a somewhat feeble constitution. Prince Henry indulged the dream of winning back Calais from France, and would no doubt have attempted the achievement if he had lived.

Of a more reflective cast of mind than his elder brother, and with tastes less martial, Prince Charles still sedulously cultivated all the accomplishments proper to a cavalier. A perfect horseman, and well skilled in all the practices of the tilt-yard—he was a model of courtesy and grace; but he had not Prince Henry's feverish and consuming passion for martial sports, nor did he,

like him, make their pursuit the sole business of life. Still, the pure flame of chivalry burnt within his breast, and he fully recognised its high and ennobling principles, and accepted the obligations they imposed. And in this respect, as in most others, he differed essentially from his august father.

The tilt-yard, and the various buildings adjoining it, already enumerated, were approached by two fine gates, likewise erected by Henry VIII., one of which, of extraordinary beauty, denominated the Cock-pit Gate, was designed by the celebrated painter, Hans Holbein. From an authority we learn that it was "built of square stone, with small squares of flint boulder, very neatly set; and that it had also battlements, and four lofty towers, the whole being enriched with bustos, roses, and portcullises." The other gate—scarcely less beautiful, and styled the Westminster Gate—was adorned with statues and medallions, and the badges of the royal house of Tudor, carved in stone.

Viewed from the summit of one of the tall turrets of the Holbein Gate, the appearance of the palace of Whitehall, at the period of our history, was exceedingly picturesque and striking—perhaps more so than at any previous or subsequent epoch, since the various structures of which it was composed were just old enough to have acquired a time-honoured character, while they were still in tolerable preservation.

Let us glance at it, then, from this point, and first turn towards the great Banqueting-House, which presents to us a noble and lengthened façade, and contains within a magnificent and lofty hall, occupying nearly its full extent, besides several other apartments of regal size and splendour. In this building, in former days, with a retinue as princely as that of the King himself, Wolsey so often and so sumptuously entertained his royal master, that he at last provoked his anger by his ostentation, and was bereft of his superb abode. Satisfied with our examination of the Banqueting-House, we will suffer our gaze to fall upon the broad court beyond it, and upon the numerous irregular but picturesque and beautiful structures by which that court—quadrangle it cannot be called, for no uniformity is observed in the disposition of the buildings—is surrounded. Here the eye is attracted by a confused mass of roofs, some flat, turreted and embattled, some pointed, with fantastical gables and stacks of tall chimneys—others with cupolas and tall clock-towers—others with crocketed pinnacles, and almost all with large gilt vanes. A large palace is a city in miniature; and so is it with Whitehall. It has two other courts besides the one we are surveying; equally crowded round with buildings, equally wanting in uniformity, but equally picturesque. On the east it extends to Scotland-yard, and on the west to the open space in front of Westminster Hall. The state apartments face the river, and their large windows look upon the stream.

Quitting the exalted position we have hitherto assumed, and

viewing Whitehall from some bark on the Thames, we shall find that it has a stern and sombre look, being castellated, in part, with towers like those over Traitor's Gate, commanding the stairs that approach it from the river. The Privy Gardens are beautifully laid out in broad terrace walks, with dainty parterres, each having a statue in the midst, while there is a fountain in the centre of the inclosure. In addition to the gardens, and separated from them by an avenue of tall trees, is a spacious bowling-green. Again changing our position, we discover, on the south of the gardens, and connected with the state apartments, a long ambulatory, called the Stone Gallery. Then returning to our first post of observation, and taking a bird's-eye view of the whole, after examining it in detail, as before mentioned, we come to the conclusion that, though irregular in the extreme, and with no pretension whatever to plan in its arrangement, the Palace of Whitehall is eminently picturesque, and imposing from its vast extent. If taken in connexion with Westminster Hall, the Parliament House, and the ancient Abbey —with the two towering gateways, on one of which we ourselves are perched—with the various structures appertaining to it, and skirting St. James's Park, and with the noble gothic cross at Charing, we are fain to acknowledge that it constitutes a very striking picture.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

PRINCE CHARLES.

There is now great stir within the palace, and its principal court is full of horsemen, some of them apparelled in steel, and with their steeds covered with rich trappings, and all attended by pages and yeomen in resplendent liveries. Besides these, there are trumpeters in crimson cassocks, mounted on goodly horses, and having their clarions adorned with silken pennons, on which the royal arms are embroidered. Then there are kettle-drummers and other musicians, likewise richly arrayed and well mounted, and the various pages, grooms, and officers belonging to the Prince of Wales standing around his charger, which is caparisoned with white and gold.

Distinguishable even amidst this brilliant and knightly throng is Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey. Mounted upon a fiery Spanish barb, presented to him by the Conde de Gondomar, he is fully equipped for the jousts. The trappings of his steed are black and white velvet, edged with silver, and the plumes upon his helmet are of the same colours, mingled. He is conversing with the Spanish Ambassador, who, like all the rest, is superbly

attired, though not in armour, and is followed by a crowd of lacqueys in jerkins and hose of black satin, guarded with silver.

An unusual degree of bustle proclaims the approach of some personage of extraordinary importance.

This is soon made known to be the Marquis of Buckingham. His arrival is announced by loud flourishes from the six mounted trumpeters by whom he is preceded. Their horses are caparisoned with orange-coloured taffeta, while they themselves are habited in gaberdines of the same stuff. After the trumpeters come four gentlemen-ushers, and four pages, mounted on his spare horses, and habited in orange-coloured doublets and hose, with yellow plumes in their caps. To them succeed the grooms in mandilions, or loose sleeveless jackets, leading the Marquis's charger, which is to run in the lists—a beautiful dark bay jennet—trapped with green velvet, sewn with pearls, and pounced with gold. Next comes Buckingham himself, in a magnificent suit of armour, engraved and damaskeened with gold, with an aigret of orange feathers nodding on his casque. Thus apparelled, it is impossible to imagine a nobler or more chivalrous figure than he presents. Though completely cased in steel, his magnificent person seems to have lost none of its freedom of movement, and he bears himself with as much grace and ease as if clad in his customary habiliments of silk and velvet. For the moment he rides a sorrel horse, whose spirit is too great to allow him to be safely depended upon in the lists, but who now serves by his fire and impetuosity to display to advantage his rider's perfect management. Buckingham is followed by thirty yeomen, apparelled like the pages, and twenty gentlemen in short cloaks and Venetian hose. He acknowledges the presence of his antagonist and the Spanish Ambassador with a courteous salutation addressed to each, and then riding forward, takes up a position beside the Duke of Lennox, who, mounted and fully equipped, and having his five companions-at-arms with him, is awaiting the coming forth of Prince Charles.

The Duke of Lennox is very sumptuously arrayed in armour, partly blue, and partly gilt and graven, and his charger is caparisoned with cloth-of-gold, embroidered with pearls. Besides this, he has four spare horses, led by his pages, in housings equally gorgeous and costly. These pages have cassock-coats, and Venetian hose, of cloth-of-silver, laid with gold lace, and caps with gold bands and white feathers, and white buskins. His retinue consists of forty gentlemen and yeomen, and four trumpeters. His companions-at-arms are all splendidly accoutred, and mounted on richly-caparisoned chargers. The most noticeable figure amongst them, however, is that of Sir Giles Mompesson; and he attracts attention from the circumstance of his armour being entirely sable, his steed jet black, and his housings, plumes, and all his equipments of the same sombre hue.

At this juncture, a page, in the Prince's livery of white and gold, approaches Sir Jocelyn, and informs him that his Highness desires to speak with him before they proceed to the tilt-yard. On receiving the summons, the young knight immediately quits De Gondomar, and, following the page to the doorway leading to the state apartments, dismounts at the steps, leaving his steed in charge of his youthful companion.

On entering the vestibule, he finds a large party assembled, comprising some of the fairest dames of court, and several noble gallants, who intend taking no other part than that of spectators in the approaching tilting-match. Most of them are known to Sir Jocelyn, and they eagerly crowd round him, fearing something may have occurred to interfere with the proceedings of the day. The young knight allays their apprehensions, and after experiencing the kindling influence always produced by the smiles of the fair, begins to ascend the great staircase, and has nearly reached the door at its head, communicating with the Stone Gallery, when it is thrown open by an usher, and Prince Charles comes forth.

The noble countenance of Prince Charles is stamped with the same gravity, and slightly touched with the same melancholy, which distinguished his features through life, but which naturally deepened as misfortune fell upon him. But as those dark days cannot now be discerned, and as all seems brilliant around him, and full of brightest promise, this prophetic melancholy is thought to lend interest to his handsome features. He is attired in a suit of black armour of exquisite workmanship, lacking only the helmet, which is carried by a page—as are the *volante pièce,* the *mentonnière,* and the *grande-garde,* intended to be worn in the field. On seeing Sir Jocelyn, he pauses, and signs to his attendants to stand back.

"I have sent for you, Sir Jocelyn," he said, "to ascertain whether it is true that Sir Giles Mompesson is amongst the Duke of Lennox's party."

"It is perfectly true, your Highness," replied Sir Jocelyn; "he is now in the court-yard."

A shade of displeasure crossed the Prince's noble countenance, and his brow darkened.

"I am sorry to hear it; and but that I should grievously offend the King, my father, I would forbid him to take part in the jousts," he cried. "Sir Giles deserves to be degraded from knighthood, rather than enjoy any of its honourable privileges."

"Entertaining these sentiments, if your Highness will make them known to the King, he will doubtless order Sir Giles's immediate withdrawal from the lists," said Sir Jocelyn. "Most assuredly he is unworthy to enter them."

"Not so," rejoined the Prince. "I have already represented the matter to his Majesty, and trusted my remonstrances would

be attended to. But I find they have proved ineffectual. Buckingham, it appears, has more weight than I have. Yet this notorious extortioner's insolence and presumption ought not to pass unpunished."

"They shall not, your Highness," replied Sir Jocelyn. "I will so deal with him that I will warrant he will never dare shew himself within the precincts of the palace again."

"Do nothing rashly," said the Prince. "You must not disguise from yourself that you may displease the King, and provoke Buckingham's animosity."

"I cannot help it," returned Sir Jocelyn. "I will insult him, if he crosses my path."

"I cannot blame you," said the Prince. "In your position I should do the same; and I am only restrained by the injunctions laid upon me by the King, from commanding his instant departure. But I must proceed towards the tilt-yard. We shall meet again anon."

With this he descended the staircase; and as soon as his train of gentlemen-ushers and pages had passed on, Sir Jocelyn followed, and making his way through the still crowded vestibule, gained the door, and vaulted on the back of his steed.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE OLD PALACE-YARD OF WESTMINSTER.

The throng outside the gates of Whitehall felt their breasts dilate, and their pulses dance, as they listened to the flourishes of the trumpets and cornets, the thundering bruit of the kettle-drums, and other martial music that proclaimed the setting forth of the steel-clad champions who were presently to figure in the lists.

It was, in sooth, a goodly sight to see the long and brilliant procession formed by the fourteen knights, each so gallantly mounted, so splendidly accoutred, and accompanied by such a host of gentlemen-ushers, pages, yeomen, and grooms, some on horseback, and some on foot; and the eye of the looker-on was never wearied of noticing the diversity of their habiliments,—some of the knights having cuirasses and helmets, polished as silver, and reflecting the sun's rays as from a mirror,—some, russet-coloured armour,—some, blue harness,—some, fluted,—some, corslets damaskeened with gold and richly ornamented,—others, black and lacquered breastplates, as was the case with the harness of Prince Charles,—and one, a dead-black coat of mail, in the instance of Sir Giles Mompesson. The arms of each were slightly varied, either in make or ornament. A few wore sashes across their breastplates, and several had knots of ribands tied

above the coronels of their lances, which were borne by their esquires.

In order to give the vast crowd assembled in the neighbourhood of Whitehall an opportunity of witnessing as much as possible of the chivalrous spectacle, it was arranged by Prince Charles that the line of the procession should first take its course through the Holbein Gate, and then, keeping near the wall of the Privy Garden, should pass beneath the King's Gate and draw up for a short time in the Old Palace-yard, near Westminster Hall, where a great concourse was assembled, amidst which a space was kept clear by parties of halberdiers and yeomen of the guard.

The procession was headed by the Prince, and the stately step of his milk-white charger well beseemed his own majestic deportment. When the long train of gentlemen-ushers and pages accompanying him had moved on, so as to leave the course clear for the next comer and his followers, a young knight presented himself, who, more than any other in the procession, attracted the attention of the spectators. This youthful knight's visor was raised so as to disclose his features, and these were so comely, that, combined with his finely-proportioned figure, perfectly displayed by his armour, he offered an *ensemble* of manly attractions almost irresistible to female eyes. Nor did the grace and skill which he exhibited in the management of his steed commend him less highly to sterner judges, who did not fail to discover that his limbs, though light, were in the highest degree vigorous and athletic, and they prognosticated most favourably of his chances of success in the jousts.

When it became known that this *preux chevalier* was Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey, the chosen antagonist of Buckingham, still greater attention was bestowed upon him; and as his good looks and gallant bearing operated strongly, as we have stated, in his favour, many a good wish and lusty cheer were uttered for him.

The effect of all this excitement among the crowd on behalf of Mounchensey was to render Buckingham's reception by the same persons comparatively cold; and the cheers given for the magnificent favourite and his princely retinue were so few and so wanting in spirit, that he, who was wholly unaccustomed to such neglect, and who had been jealously listening to the cheers attending Mounchensey's progress, was highly offended, and could scarcely conceal his displeasure. But if he was indignant at his own reception, he was exasperated at the treatment experienced by his ally.

Close behind him rode a knight in black armour, with a sable panache on his helm. Stalwart limbs and a manly bearing had this knight, and he bestrode his powerful charger like one well accustomed to the saddle; but though no one could gainsay his skill as a horseman, or his possible prowess as a man-at-arms,

most thought he had no title to be there, and gave unmistakeable evidence of their conviction by groans and hootings.

This black knight was Sir Giles Mompesson, and very grim and menacing was his aspect.

Ample accommodation for the knightly company and their attendants, as well as for the multitudes congregated to behold them, was afforded by the broad area in front of Westminster Hall; nevertheless, as those in the rear could not see as well as those in front, every chance elevation offering a better view was eagerly seized upon. All the accessible points of Westminster Hall—its carved porch and windows—were invaded. So were the gates of the Old Palace hard by—so were the buttresses of the Abbey; and men were perched, like grotesque ornaments, on crocketed pinnacles and stone water-spouts. The tall and curiously-painted clock-tower, resembling an Italian campanile, which then faced the portals of Westminster Hall, was covered with spectators. But the position most coveted, and esteemed the best, was the fountain at that time standing in the midst of the Old Palace-yard. This structure, which was of great antiquity and beauty, with a pointed summit supported by tall slender shafts, and a large basin beneath, formed a sort of pivot, round which the procession turned as it arrived upon the ground, and consequently formed the best point of view of all; and those were esteemed highly fortunate who managed to obtain a place upon it.

Amongst these lucky individuals were three of the reader's acquaintances, and we think he will scarce fail to recognise the saucy-faced apprentice with the cudgel under his arm, and the fair-haired, blue-eyed, country-looking maiden at his side, as well as the hale old rustic by whom they were attended. All three were delighted with their position, and Dick Taverner took full credit to himself for his cleverness in procuring it for them. As to pretty Gillian, nothing could please her better, for she could not only see all that was going forward, but everybody could see her—even Prince Charles himself; and she flattered herself that she attracted no little attention. And now that the whole of the procession had come up, the picture was certainly magnificent, and well worth contemplation. Everything was favourable to the enjoyment of the spectacle. The day was bright and beautiful, and a sparkling sunshine lighted up the splendid accoutrements of the knights, the gorgeous caparisons of their steeds, and the rich habiliments of their attendants; while a gentle breeze stirred the plumes upon the helmets, and fluttered the bandrols on their lances. The effect was heightened by enlivening strains of minstrelsy, and the fanfares of the trumpeters. The utmost enthusiasm was awakened among the spectators, and their acclamations were loud and long.

At this juncture, Dick Taverner, who had been shouting as

lustily as the rest, tossing his cap in the air, and catching it dexterously as it fell, held his breath and clapped his bonnet on his head, for an object met his eye which fixed his attention. It was the sombre figure of a knight accoutred in black armour, who was pressing his steed through the throng in the direction of the fountain. His beaver was up, and the sinister countenance was not unknown to the apprentice.

"Saints defend us!" he ejaculated. "Is it possible that can be Sir Giles Mompesson? What doth he here amidst this noble company? The villanous extortioner cannot surely be permitted to enter the lists."

"Hold your peace, friend, if you are wise," muttered a deep voice behind him.

"No, I will not be silent," rejoined the apprentice, without looking round at his cautioner, but keeping his eye fixed upon Sir Giles. "I will tell the felon knight my mind. I am not afraid of him. Harkye, my masters," he called in a loud voice, to those around him. "Do you know who that black raven before you is? If not, I will tell you. He would peck out your eyes if he could, and devour you and your substance, as he has done that of many others. That bird of ill omen is Sir Giles Mompesson."

"Impossible!" cried a bystander, indignantly. "Yet, now I look again, 'tis certainly he."

"As certain as that we are standing here," said the apprentice; "and if you want further proof, behold, he is closing his visor. He thinks to hide himself from our notice; but the trick shall not avail him. A groan for the knavish extortioner, my masters —a deep groan for Sir Giles Mompesson!"

Thus enjoined, a great hooting was made by the by-standers, and Sir Giles's name was coupled with epithets that could not be very agreeable to his ear.

"You were best let him alone, fool," cried the deep voice behind Dick. "You will only bring yourself into trouble."

But the apprentice was not to be thus advised; and could not even be restrained by the entreaties of Gillian, who was sadly apprehensive that some mischief would befall him. So conspicuous did he make himself in the disturbance, that at last Sir Giles rode towards him, and singling him out, seized him with his gauntleted hand, and dragged him from the edge of the fountain. Dick struggled manfully to get free, but he was in a grasp of iron' and all his efforts at releasing himself were ineffectual. He called on those near him to rescue him, but they shrank from the attempt. Poor Gillian was dreadfully alarmed. She thought her lover was about to be sacrificed to Sir Giles's resentment on he spot; and, falling on her knees, she piteously besought him to spare his life.

"For shame, Gillian," cried Dick; "do not demean yourself

thus. The caitiff knight dares not harm me for his life; and if he should maltreat me, I shall be well avenged by my patron, Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey. I would my voice might reach him —I should not long be kept here. To the rescue! Sir Jocelyn! to the rescue!" And he shouted forth the young knight's name at the top of his voice.

"Who calls me?" demanded Mounchensey, pressing through the throng in the direction of the outcries.

"I, your humble follower, Dick Taverner," roared the apprentice; "I am in the clutches of the devil, and I pray you release me."

"Ha! what is this?" cried Sir Jocelyn. "Set him free at once, Sir Giles, I command you."

"What if I refuse?" rejoined the other.

"Then I will instantly enforce compliance," thundered Mounchensey.

"If I release him, it is because I must defend myself and punish your insolence," cried Sir Giles. And as he spoke, he thrust back the apprentice with such force that he would have fallen to the ground if he had not dropped into the arms of his kneeling mistress.

"Now, Sir Jocelyn," continued Sir Giles, fiercely, "you shall answer for this interference"—

"Hold!" interposed the authoritative voice of Prince Charles; "we must have no unseemly brawls here. To your places at once in the procession, Sir Knights. We are about to set forward to the tilt-yard."

With this he gave the word to move on, and all further sound of disturbance was drowned by the trampling of steeds and the bruit of the kettle-drums, cornets, and trumpets.

Nowise disheartened by what had occurred, Dick Taverner would have followed with the stream, and carried his mistress and her grandsire along with him; but the former had been so much terrified by what had occurred, that dreading lest her lover's imprudence should get him into further scrapes, she positively refused to proceed any further.

"I have seen quite enough," she cried; "and if you have any love for me, Dick, you will take me away, and not expose yourself to further risk. If you are indeed bent on going on, I shall return with my grandsire."

"He will do well to follow your advice, young mistress," said the deep voice which had previously sounded in Dick's ears; "if he had taken mine, he would not have voluntarily thrust himself into the fangs of the tiger, from which it is well for him that he has escaped with a whole skin."

As this was said, Dick and his mistress turned towards the speaker, and beheld a tall man, masked, and muffled in a black cloak.

"Heaven shield us! 'tis the Enemy!" exclaimed Gillian, trembling.

"Not so, fair damsel," replied the disguised personage; "I am not the Arch-enemy of man, neither am I enemy of yours nor of Dick Taverner. Your froward lover neglected my previous caution, but I will give him another, in the hope that you may induce him to profit by it. Let him keep out of the reach of Sir Giles Mompesson's emissaries, or his wedding-day will be longer in coming than you both hope for. Nay, it may not come at all."

With these words, the man in the mask mingled with the crowd, and almost instantly disappeared, leaving the young couple, especially Gillian, in much consternation. So earnest was the maiden for instant departure, that Dick was obliged to comply; and as the whole of the thoroughfares about Whitehall were impassable, they proceeded to the river side, and took boat for London Bridge, at a hostel near which old Greenford had put up his horse.

CHAPTER XL.

THE TILT-YARD.

Meanwhile, the procession was pursuing its slow course towards the tilt-yard. It returned by the route it had taken in coming; but it now kept on the north side of King Street, which thoroughfare was divided in the midst by a railing, and deeply sanded.

Here, as in the area before Westminster-hall, not a wall, not a window, not a roof, but had its occupants. The towers of the two great gates were thronged—so were the roofs of the tennis-court and the manége, and the summit of the cock-pit; the latter, indeed, was a capital position, inasmuch as it not only afforded an excellent view of the procession, but commanded the interior of the tilt-yard. No wonder, therefore, that great efforts should be made to obtain a place upon it, nor is it surprising that our old friend, Madame Bonaventure, who had by no means lost her influence among the court gallants, though she lacked the support of Lord Roos owing to the absence of that young nobleman upon his travels,—it is not surprising, we say, that she should be among the favoured individuals who had secured a position there. Undoubtedly she would have preferred a seat amongst the court dames in the galleries of the tilt-yard, but as this was unattainable, she was obliged to be content; and, indeed, she had no reason to complain, for she saw quite as much as those inside, and was more at her ease.

From this exalted position, while listening to the inspiriting clangour of the trumpets, the clattering of arms, and the trampling and neighing of steeds, Madame Bonaventure could scrutinize the deportment of each knight as he issued from the lofty arch of the Holbein Gate, and rode slowly past her. She had ample time to count the number of his attendants before he disappeared from her view. As Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey approached with his visor raised, and his countenance radiant with smiles at the cheers he had received, she recognised in him her former guest, and participating in the general enthusiasm prevailing for the young knight, she leaned over the parapet, and addressed to him a greeting so hearty that it procured for her a courteous salutation in return. Enchanted with this, she followed with her eyes the graceful figure of Sir Jocelyn till it was lost to view—to reappear a moment after in the tilt-yard.

Turning in this direction,—for all her interest was now centred in the young knight,—Madame Bonaventure allowed her gaze to pass over the entrance of the lists, and she soon espied him she sought in conference with Prince Charles and some other knights of his party. Near them was stationed Garter King-at-arms, apparelled in his tabard, and mounted on a horse covered with housings of cloth of gold. Glancing round the inclosure, she perceived that all the foremost seats in the galleries and scaffolds set apart for the principal court dames were already filled, and she was quite dazzled with the galaxy of female loveliness presented to her gaze. Behind the court dames were a host of fluttering gallants in rich apparel, laughing and jesting with them on the probable issue of the contest they had come to witness.

She then looked round the arena. Stout barriers of wood were drawn across it, with openings at either end for the passage of the knights. At these openings were placed all the various officers of the tilt-yard whose attendance was not required outside, including eight mounted trumpeters, four at one end of the field and four at the other, together with a host of yeomen belonging to Prince Charles, in liveries of white, with leaves of gold, and black caps, with wreaths and bands of gold, and black and white plumes.

At the western extremity of the inclosure stood the royal gallery, richly decorated for the occasion with velvet and cloth of gold, and having the royal arms emblazoned in front. Above it floated the royal standard. Supported by strong oaken posts, and entered by a staircase at the side, this gallery was open below, and the space thus left was sufficiently large to accommodate a dozen or more mounted knights, while thick curtains could be let down at the sides to screen them from observation, if required. Here it was intended that the Prince of Wales and his six companions-at-arms should assemble, and wait till sum-

moned forth from it by the marshals of the field. There was a similar place of assemblage for the Duke of Lennox and his knights at the opposite end of the tilt-yard; and at both spots there were farriers, armourers, and grooms in attendance, to render assistance, if needful.

On the right of the field stood an elevated platform, covered with a canopy, and approached by a flight of steps. It was reserved for the marshals and judges, and facing it was the post affixed to the barriers, from which the ring, the grand prize of the day, was suspended, at a height exactly within reach of a lance. Like the streets without, the whole arena was deeply sanded.

This was what Madame Bonaventure beheld from the roof of the cock-pit, and a very pretty sight she thought it.

All things, it will be seen, were in readiness in the tilt-yard,—and the arrival of the King seemed to be impatiently expected—not only by the knights who were eager to display their prowess, but by the court dames, and the gallants with them, as well as by all the officials scattered about in different parts of the field, and enlivening it by their variegated costumes.

Suddenly, loud acclamations resounding from all sides of the tilt-yard, accompanied by flourishes of trumpets, proclaimed the entrance of the royal laggard to the gallery. James took his place in the raised seat assigned to him, and after conferring for a few moments with the Conde de Gondomar, who formed part of the brilliant throng of nobles and ambassadors in attendance, he signified to Sir John Finett that the jousting might commence, and the royal pleasure was instantly made known to the marshals of the field.

The first course was run by Prince Charles, who acquitted himself with infinite grace and skill, but failed in carrying off the ring; and similar ill luck befel the Duke of Lennox. The Marquis of Hamilton was the next to run, and he met with no better success; and the fourth essay was made by Buckingham. His career was executed with all the consummate address for which the favourite was remarkable, and it appeared certain that he would carry off the prize; but in lowering his lance he did not make sufficient allowance for the wind, and this caused it slightly to swerve, and though he touched the ring, he did not bear it away. The course, however, was considered a good one by the judges, and much applauded; but the Marquis was greatly mortified by his failure.

It now came to Sir Jocelyn's turn, and his breast beat high with ardour as he prepared to start on his career. Keeping his back to the ring till the moment of setting forward, he made a demivolte to the right, and then gracefully raising his lance, as his steed started on its career, he continued to hold it aloft until he began to near the object of his aim, when he gently and

firmly allowed the point to decline over the right ear of his horse, and adjusted it in a line with the ring. His aim proved so unerring that he carried off the prize, amid universal applause.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE TILTING-MATCH.

After all the other competitors for the prize had essayed a career within the arena, Sir Jocelyn's was held to be the best course run. The ring was again carried off both by the Earl of Pembroke and Lord Mordaunt; but in the opinion of the marshals of the field, neither of those noblemen displayed so much grace and skill as Mounchensey: and the decision was confirmed by the King.

The applauses which rang through the tilt-yard, on the announcement that our handsome young knight had gained the first course, increased the bitterness of Buckingham's feelings towards him; and he expressed his regrets in a low tone to Sir Giles Mompesson that the combat about to take place was not *à l'outrance* instead of being *à plaisance.*

Sir Giles smiled grimly in reply.

Some little time elapsed, during which preparations were made for the tilting-match, and great excitement pervaded the assemblage. The King laughingly inquired of the Spanish ambassador if he still felt secure of winning his wager, and was answered by De Gondomar that he had never had the slightest misgiving on the subject, but he was now better satisfied than ever that the result of the coming struggle would justify his expectations. In the ladies' gallery an unusual degree of interest was manifested in what was going forward; and many a wish was audibly expressed by many a fair dame in Mounchensey's favour.

At length the trumpets sounded, and the cries of the heralds were heard cheering on the combatants as they prepared to dash furiously against each other, bidding them do their devoir bravely, since bright eyes looked down upon them. These stimulants to valorous display were scarcely needed, for the champions were eager to prove their prowess. Issuing one by one, from beneath their respective scaffolds, and curbing the impatience of their steeds till they received from the marshals permission to start, they rushed from their posts with lightning swiftness to meet with a crashing shock midway. Various successes attended the different combatants, but on the whole the advantage lay clearly on the side of the Duke of Lennox, none of whose party had sustained any material discomfiture; while on the side of Prince Charles, the Earls of Montgomery and Rutland had been unhorsed. The interest of the spectators was kept in breathless

suspense to the last, it being arranged that the tilting-match should close with the conflict between Buckingham and Mounchensey.

Thus, when the trumpets sounded for the seventh and last time, and the two knights stationed themselves opposite each other, every eye was intently fixed upon them. Apparently, no two antagonists could be better or more equally matched than they were; and throughout the whole field it would have been in vain to search for another pair equally gifted by nature, both being models of manly beauty of feature and symmetry of frame. Indeed, they might have been cast in the same mould, so nearly alike were they in shape and size; and if their armour had been similar, and their steeds corresponding in colour, they would have been undistinguishable, when apart. Buckingham in some respects presented the nobler figure of the two, owing to his flowing plumes, his embossed and inlaid armour, and the magnificent housings of his charger—but he was fully rivalled by the grace and chivalrous air of his antagonist.

As the Marquis, confident in his address, disdained the use of the *passe-guarde* and the *mentonnière*, Mounchensey abandoned those defences, though they were used by all the other knights, and placed his reliance in the strength of his breast-plate and gorget, and in the force of his right arm.

When summoned forth by the trumpets, the two champions executed demi-voltes with curvets, and then stood stock-still at either end of the barriers. Each then selected a lance from the bundle offered them by the esquires, and their choice of a weapon made, they carefully fastened down their visors, which up to this moment had been raised.

Seeing them in readiness, the heralds gave the signal for the encounter. Starting against each other like thunderbolts, they met in mid-career. The shock was tremendous, and many a cry sprang from female lips, while bursts of applause arose from the hardier spectators.

Both lances were shivered, but the results of the strokes dealt on either side were widely different. Mounchensey maintained his seat firmly in the saddle, though his steed had been forced back upon its haunches by his opponent's blow, who had touched his gorget; and riding on with all the ease, vigour, and grace our young knight had previously exhibited, he threw down the truncheon of his lance, and opened his gauntlet to show that his hand was wholly uninjured.

Very differently had it fared with Buckingham, whose defeat was unquestionable. Unhorsed and unhelmeted, he was rolled in the dust; and as he sprang to his feet, had the mortification of hearing the deafening cheers that greeted his adversary's triumph. Eager to hide his confusion, he vaulted upon the back of his steed, which was brought to him by an esquire, the animal's

flanks still quivering and reeking from the terrible shock it had undergone, and dashed beneath the scaffold he had so lately quitted—his pride severely humbled.

While the crest-fallen favourite thus retired to recover himself, Sir Jocelyn rode slowly towards the royal gallery. Having now raised his visor, his features were fully revealed to view, and perhaps were never seen to such advantage as at this proud and happy moment. His emotions were indeed enviable—but one thing was wanting to complete his satisfaction—the presence of her, before whom, of all others, he was most eager to distinguish himself. What mattered it that scarves and kerchiefs were waved to him by some of the fairest dames in the land? What mattered it that his name was called aloud, and that gloves and knots of ribands fell at his feet, as he rode past the ladies' gallery? His heart was untouched by smile or glance, and he paused not to pick up one of the favours showered upon him.

But what means this sudden change in his demeanour? Why does he start and stop, and look inquiringly towards the back of the gallery? Whom does he discern amongst that bevy of beauties? Can it be Aveline? And if so, how comes she there?

As he pauses, all eyes are fixed upon her towards whom his gaze is directed. There is no difficulty in detecting the object of his regards, for her attire is simpler than that of all the glittering dames around her, and of a sadder hue. Her confusion also betrays her. She would not be seen by him she came to see. She would muffle up her features, but it is too late; and she is not only fully exposed to his view, but to that of a hundred other curious eyes. Though many a high-born damsel marvels at the young knight's insensibility to her own superior attractions, none can deny that the unknown maiden is exquisitely beautiful, and demands are eagerly made as to who she may be. No one can answer, and no clue is given by her companion, for the elderly dame by whom she is attended, and who resembles a duenna, is likewise unknown to all.

As soon as Sir Jocelyn recovers his surprise, he requests a favour from the lady of his love, and she cannot refuse him—for immediately all the dames in front of the gallery move aside, to let her advance.

With her pale cheeks crimsoned with blushes, and her dark eyes flashing with mingled emotions of shame and pleasure, Aveline steps forward—and having no other favour to bestow upon her knight, she gives him her kerchief, which he presses to his lips, and then with a graceful salutation moves forward on his course. This is no time for explanation—and he must be content with his happiness, without inquiring how it has been procured for him.

The incident, however, has been generally noticed, and causes

a good deal of speculation and talk amongst the female portion of the assemblage. There is one individual, however, of the opposite sex, who witnesses it with sentiments different from those by which most other observers are affected. This is Sir Giles Mompesson. He, it appears, has not been unaware of Aveline's presence at the jousts, though he did not anticipate its revelation in this manner to Sir Jocelyn; and a bitter smile crosses his lips, as he watches the brief interview between the pair. He cares not what transports they indulge in now—nor what hopes they form for the future. He promises himself that he will effectually mar their bliss!

CHAPTER XLII.

THE FELON KNIGHT.

A few more bounds of his steed brought Sir Jocelyn to the royal gallery, where he dismounted, and, leaving his steed in charge of an esquire, ascended the stairs in company with the marshals of the field, and presently found himself in the presence of the King. James received him very graciously. On the right of the monarch stood the Conde de Gondomar, who smiled on his *protégé* as he approached, and glanced at a silver coffer full of diamonds, pearls, emeralds, amethysts, and other precious stones, borne by an attendant in the gorgeous livery of the Marquis of Buckingham.

"We greet ye as victor, Sir Jocelyn," said James, as the young knight made a profound obeisance to him; "and it rejoices us to say ye hae demeaned yourself honourably and fairly in the field. How say ye, sirs?" he added to the marshals and others. "Shall not the prize of the day be adjudged to Sir Jocelyn?"

"It must be so, of right, your Majesty," replied the foremost of them. "A better course at the ring could not be run than Sir Jocelyn hath performed, nor could greater 'vantage be gained in the jousts than he hath obtained over the Marquis of Buckingham. All has been done by him in accordance with the rules of honour, and without fraud or supercherie."

"Enough, gentlemen," said James. "Count, ye hae won your wager; and as to you, Sir Jocelyn, ye hae proved yourself a very mirror of chivalry—*exemplar antiquæ fortitudinis et magnanimitatis*—on the pattern of Bayard, the knight without fear and without reproach, and the like of whom we scarce expected to see in these latter days. You are right weel entitled to the prize ye hae gained, and which his Excellency so honourably assigns to you."

"With your Majesty's permission, I will add the diamond clasp which I staked against the Marquis's casket of gems," said De Gondomar, "and will beseech Sir Jocelyn to wear it as a testimony on my part of his merit as a cavalier. It is scarcely too much to say for him, after his recent brilliant achievements, that he takes rank amongst the foremost of the distinguished knights encircling your Majesty's throne."

"He takes rank as the first and best," cried James, emphatically; "since he hath overcome Buckingham, who till this day hath held the chief place among our chivalry."

"Your Majesty overwhelms me by your commendations," replied Sir Jocelyn; "and I can only say, in reply, that my best energies shall be devoted to your service, whenever and howsoever called upon. As to your Excellency's gift," he added to De Gondomar, who had unfastened the glittering clasp and presented it to him, "I shall ever guard it, as a devotee in your own sunny land of Spain would the most precious relic."

The coffer containing the gems was then, upon a sign from the King, delivered to Sir Jocelyn, who, as he received it from the attendant, took a string of pearls from it and gave them to the marshal, requesting they might be offered as *largesse* to the heralds; and the officer promised that the request should be complied with. Having bestowed a similar boon upon each of the marshals, Mounchensey requested that the coffer might be placed in charge of his esquire—and his directions were complied with.

"Is all concluded?" demanded the King.

"The contest for the prize is necessarily decided," replied the marshal; "but there yet remains the combat with the sword on horseback, if it pleases Sir Jocelyn to engage in it."

"What saith our young knight?" demanded the King. "Is he willing to risk the laurels he hath so fairly won on another, and it may be more dangerous encounter? What he hath already done may fairly entitle him to decline further hazard, if he be so minded."

"I should ill deserve your Majesty's high commendations if I hesitated for a moment," replied Mounchensey; "but so far from feeling disinclination to the combat, I should regret if this opportunity for further distinction were denied me. With your Majesty's gracious permission, I will pray the marshals of the field to let it be proclaimed by the heralds and pursuivants-at-arms that I challenge any true knight to do battle with me with the sword, and on horseback."

"Ye will fight with a blunted blade, Sir Jocelyn," cried the King. "We maun hae nae risk of life. Our dear dog, Steenie, hath had his bonnie craig well-nigh broken, and we will hae nae mair mischief done."

"The laws of the tilt-yard, with which Sir Jocelyn is doubt-

less well acquainted," observed the marshal, "require that the edge of the sword shall be dull, as your Majesty hath stated, and that no blow shall be dealt with the point of the weapon. These conditions must be strictly observed."

"They shall be," replied Sir Jocelyn; "and I pray you now to do your devoir, and make the proclamation."

On this the marshal and his followers departed; and Sir Jocelyn, bowing reverently to the King, took his way after them, and descending the stairs, leaped on the back of his charger.

Soon after this, and while a sword, blunted in the manner prescribed, was girded round his waist by his esquire, the trumpets were sounded, and the challenge proclaimed by the marshal. It was immediately responded to by a blast from the opposite end of the arena, and a herald, stationed at this point, called out in a loud voice that the challenge was accepted. Again the excitement rose high among the spectators; again all eyes were directed towards Sir Jocelyn; and again many ardent aspirations were uttered by his numerous fair admirers for his success—though none so fervent as that breathed by Aveline. Sir Jocelyn cast one glance towards that part of the ladies' gallery where he knew her to be placed, and then prepared for his last essay.

As yet, he knew not who was to be his antagonist; but when a knight in sable armour, and with a sable plume upon his helm, rode from beneath the scaffold, he discovered, to his great indignation, that it was Sir Giles Mompesson. After a moment's reflection, he resolved upon a course of action. When the signal for combat was given by the marshal, and Sir Giles, sword in hand, dashed into the arena, Mounchensey rode towards him, but without drawing his sword, and, raising himself in the saddle, commanded him in a thundering voice to retire.

The impetuosity of Sir Giles's career carried him past his antagonist, but he now wheeled round, and regarded Mounchensey fiercely from beneath the bars of his helmet.

"Retire, said you?" he exclaimed; "not unless you acknowledge yourself defeated. In my turn I bid you go back to the point you started from, and commence the combat in due form, or I shall hold you vanquished, and compel you to abase your crest."

"Hear me," cried Sir Jocelyn, "and let it be heard by all. I challenged any *true* knight to the combat, but you answer not to the description. I proclaim you publicly in this place as a false and felon knight, and declare you utterly unworthy of my sword. Back to your starting-place, and if the heralds do their duty, they will hack off your spurs, and drive you with shame from the lists."

"And think you I will tamely brook this insult?" roared Sir Giles; "draw your sword at once, and let it be a mortal combat between us."

"Never," replied Sir Jocelyn, disdainfully. "I will not stoop to the level of your infamy."

"Then stoop to the earth," cried Sir Giles, aiming a terrible blow at him with his sword.

If the stroke had taken effect as intended, it would probably have made good Mompesson's threat; but Sir Jocelyn was too wary and too agile even for his powerful assailant. Before the sword could descend, he seized his adversary's wrist, and in another instant possessed himself of the blade. This he accomplished without injury, as the sword was blunted. Still maintaining his grasp of the weapon, he raised himself in his stirrups to give additional force to the blow, and with the pummel of his sword struck Sir Giles a blow upon the brain-pan with such violence, that he dropped from the saddle as if shot.

During this strange scene, not a word had been uttered by the spectators, who looked on with the greatest curiosity, wondering how it would end. As Sir Giles fell from his horse, and lay stretched in perfect insensibility on the ground, a tremendous shout was raised, and Sir Jocelyn was as much applauded as if he had performed an extraordinary feat—so universally was the extortioner detested.

Nor was there any sympathy manifested when, a few moments afterwards, Sir Giles was raised from the ground by the pursuivants, and his helmet being removed, exhibited a countenance livid as death, with a stream of blood coursing slowly down the temples. Many would have been well pleased if he had been killed outright, but the chirurgeon in attendance pronounced that he was only stunned by the blow.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE PRIVATE CABINET OF SIR GILES MOMPESSON.

A SMALL room, and rendered yet smaller by the numerous chests and strong boxes encroaching upon its narrow limits. In some cases these boxes are piled, one upon another, till they touch the ceiling. All of them look stout enough, yet many are further strengthened by iron hoops and broad-headed nails, and secured by huge padlocks. The door is cased with iron, within and without, and has a ponderous lock, of which the master of the room always keeps the key, and never trusts it out of his own hand.

This small chamber is the private cabinet of Sir Giles Mompesson.

No one is permitted to enter it without him. Though his myrmidons are fully aware of its existence, and can give a shrewd guess at its contents, only two of them have set foot within it.

The two thus privileged are Clement Lanyere and Lupo Vulp. Neither the promoter nor the scrivener are much in the habit of talking over their master's affairs, even with their comrades, and are almost as habitually reserved as he is himself; still, from the few words let fall by them from time to time, the myrmidons have picked up a tolerable notion of the private cabinet; of its hidden cupboards in the walls, its drawers with secret springs, its sliding planks with hollows beneath them; its chests full of treasure, or what is the same thing as treasure—bonds, mortgage-deeds, and other securities; and its carefully concealed hoards of plate, jewels, and other valuables. Some of the least scrupulous among them—such as Staring, Hugh, Cutting Dick, and old Tom Wootton—have often discussed the possibility of secretly visiting it, and making a perquisition of its stores; but they have been hitherto restrained by their fears of their terrible and vindictive master.

On looking into the cabinet we find Sir Giles seated at a table, with a large chest open beside him, from which he has taken for examination sundry yellow parchments, with large seals attached to them. He is now occupied with a deed, on one of the skins of which the plan of an important estate is painted, and on this his attention becomes fixed. His countenance is cadaverous, and its ghastly hue adds to its grimness of expression. A band is tied round his head, and there is an expression of pain in his face, and an air of languor and debility in his manner, very different from what is usual with him. It is plain he has not yet recovered from the effects of the crushing blow he received at the jousts.

Opposite him sits his partner, Sir Francis Mitchell; and the silence that has reigned between them for some minutes is first broken by the old usurer.

"Well, Sir Giles," he inquires, "are you satisfied with your examination of these deeds of the Mounchensey property? The estates have been in the family, as you see, for upwards of two centuries—ever since the reign of Henry IV., in fact—and you have a clear and undisputed title to all the property depicted on that plan—to an old hall and a large park around it, eight miles in circumference, and almost as well stocked with deer as the royal chase of Theobalds; and you have a title to other territorial domains extending from Mounchensey Place and Park to the coast,—a matter of twelve miles as the crow flies, Sir Giles,—and including three manors and a score of little villages. Will not these content you? Methinks they should. I' faith, my worthy partner, when I come to reckon up all your possessions, your houses and lands, and your different sources of revenue—the sums owing to you in bond and mortgage—your monopolies and your patents—when I reckon up all these, I say, and add thereunto the wealth hoarded in this cabinet, which you have

not placed out at usance—I do not hesitate to set you down as one of the richest of my acquaintance. There be few whose revenue is so large as yours, Sir Giles. 'Tis strange, though I have had the same chance as yourself of making money, I have not a hundredth part of your wealth."

"Not a whit strange," replied Sir Giles, laying down the deed and regarding his partner somewhat contemptuously. "I waste not what I acquire. I have passions as well as yourself, Sir Francis; but I keep them under subjection. I drink not—I riot not—I shun all idle company. I care not for outward show, or for the vanities of dress. I have only one passion which I indulge,—Revenge. You are a slave to sensuality, and pamper your lusts at any cost. Let a fair woman please your eye, and she must be bought, be the price what it may. No court prodigal was ever more licentious or extravagant than you are."

"Sir Giles! Sir Giles! I pray you, spare me. My enemies could not report worse of me."

"Nay, your enemies would say that your extravagance is your sole merit, and that therein you are better than I," rejoined Sir Giles, with a sardonic laugh. "But I rejoice to think I am free from all such weaknesses. The veriest enchantress could not tempt me. I am proof against all female seductions. Think you the damsel lives who could induce me to give for her half these broad lands in Norfolk—this ancient hall, and its wide-spread domains? I trow not."

"Perchance I have given too much," cried the old usurer, eagerly; "if so, it is not too late to amend our contract. Between us, there should be fair dealing, Sir Giles."

"There is none other than fair dealing on my part," replied the extortioner, sternly; "and the terms of our agreement cannot be departed from. What I have just said applies to your general mode of life; but you have better reason for your conduct in this instance than is usual with you, since you combine the gratification of revenge with the indulgence of your other passions. You obtain a fair young bride, and at the same time deprive the person whom you hate most of all others, of the mistress of his affections. This is as it should be. Vengeance cannot be too dearly purchased, and the more refined the vengeance, the higher must necessarily be the price paid for it. In no way can you so cruelly injure this detested Mounchensey, as by robbing him of his mistress. And the blow dealt by you shall be followed by others not less severe on my part."

"Ay, ay, Sir Giles, you have to wipe out the outrage he inflicted upon you in the tilt-yard. As I am a true gentleman, that was worse than the indignity I endured from him in the court-yard of the palace. It must be confessed that the villain hath a powerful hand as well as a sharp tongue, and follows up his bitter words by bold deeds. The stroke he dealt you with

his sword was like a blow from a sledge-hammer, Sir Giles. He felled you from your horse as a butcher felleth an ox; and in good truth, I at first thought the ox's fate had been yours, and that you would never rise again. Your helmet was dinted in as if by a great shot. And for twelve hours and upwards you were senseless and speechless;—but, thanks to my care and the skill of Luke Hatton, the apothecary who tended you, you have been brought round. After such treatment, I cannot wonder that you are eager for revenge upon Sir Jocelyn. How will you deal with him, Sir Giles? How will you deal with him?"

"I will hurl him from the proud position he now holds," replied the other, "and immure him in the Fleet."

"While I revel in the bliss he panted to enjoy," cried the old usurer, chuckling. "Take it altogether, 'tis the sweetest scheme we ever planned, and the most promising, Sir Giles! But when am I to claim Aveline? when shall I make her mine?"

"You shall claim her to-morrow, and wed her as soon after as you list."

"Nay, there shall be no delay on my part, Sir Giles. I am all impatience. When such a dainty repast is spread out before me, I am not likely to be a laggard. But now, to the all-important point on which the whole affair hinges! How am I to assert my claim to her hand?—how enforce it when made? Explain that to me, Sir Giles, I beseech you."

"Readily," replied the extortioner. "But before doing so, let me give you a piece of information which will surprise you, and which will show you that my tenure of this great Norfolk property is not quite so secure as you suppose it. You are aware that Sir Ferdinando Mounchensey had a younger brother, Osmond—"

"Who disappeared when very young, and died, it was concluded," interrupted Sir Francis, "for he was never heard of more. And it was lucky for us he did so die, or he might have proved a serious obstacle to our seizure of these estates; for I remember it being stated at the time, by one of the judges, that had he been living, he might have procured a reversal of the Star-Chamber sentence upon Sir Ferdinando in his favour."

"Precisely so, and that judge's opinion was correct," said Sir Giles. "Now listen to me, Sir Francis. It is quite true that Osmond Mounchensey quitted his home when very young, owing to some family quarrel; but it is not true that he died. On the contrary, I have recently ascertained, beyond a doubt, that he is still alive. Hitherto I have failed in tracing him out, though I have got a clue to him; but he has enveloped himself in so much mystery that he is difficult of detection. Yet I trust to succeed ere long; and my great business will be to prevent his reappearance, which would be fraught with danger to us both. I have a scheme on foot in reference to him which will answer

more than one purpose. You will learn it anon. And now, to give you the explanation you require in respect to Aveline."

And he stamped upon the floor.

"You are not about to invoke a spirit of darkness to our councils?" said Sir Francis, staring at him in astonishment and alarm.

"You will see," rejoined the extortioner, with a grim smile.

After a brief pause, the door was almost noiselessly opened, and Clement Lanyere entered the chamber.

"What has Lanyere to do with the matter?" cried Sir Francis, suspiciously regarding the promoter, who was without his mask.

"You will hear," replied Sir Giles. "Be pleased to inform Sir Francis, good Lanyere, how you come to be in a position to demand the hand of fair Mistress Aveline Calveley."

"He demand it! I understand you not, Sir Giles!" exclaimed the old usurer.

"Let him speak, I pray you, Sir Francis," returned the other. "You will the sooner learn what you desire to know."

CHAPTER XLIV.

CLEMENT LANYERE'S STORY.

"My tale shall be briefly told," said Lanyere. "You are aware, Sir Francis, that in the pursuit of my avocation I am often led into the most dangerous quarters of the metropolis, and at hours when the peril to any honest man is doubled. Adventures have not unfrequently occurred to me when so circumstanced, and I have been indebted to my right hand and my good sword for deliverance from many a desperate risk. Late one night, I chanced to be in the neighbourhood of Whitefriars, in a place called the Wilderness, when, hearing cries for help, accompanied by the clash of steel, I rushed towards a narrow court, whence the clatter and vociferations resounded, and perceived, by the light of the moon, which fortunately happened to be shining brightly at the time, one man engaged with four others, who were evidently bent upon cutting his throat in order to take his purse. He defended himself gallantly, but the odds were too great, and he must have been speedily slain, for the villains swore with great oaths they would murder him if he continued to resist them—if I had not come to the rescue. I arrived just in time. They were pressing him hard. I struck down the point of a rapier which was within an inch of his breast—gave the swashbuckler who carried it a riposta he did not expect, and sent him off howling—and then addressed myself to the others with such good effect, that in a brief space the stranger and I

were alone together. I had been slightly wounded in the fray; but I thought nothing of it—a mere scratch. It seemed something more to the gentleman I had preserved. He expressed great concern for me, and bound his handkerchief round my arm. I was about to depart, but he detained me to renew his professions of gratitude for the service I had rendered him, and his earnest wish that he might be able to requite me. From his discourse, and from the texts of Scripture he mixed up with it, I knew him to be a Puritan; and I might have supposed him to be a preacher of the Gospel, had he not carried a sword, and borne himself so manfully in the encounter. However, he left me no doubt on the subject, for he told me he was named Hugh Calveley, and that he had served in the wars with more honour to himself than profit. He added, that if the knaves had succeeded in their design, and robbed and slain him, they would have deprived his daughter of her sole protector; and, indeed, of all means of subsistence, since the little they had would be lost with him. On hearing this, a thought struck me, and I said to him—'You have expressed an earnest desire to requite the service I have just been fortunate enough to render you, and as I am well assured your professions are not idly made, I shall not hesitate to proffer a request to you.' 'Ask what you will; if I have it to give, it shall be yours,' he replied. 'You make that promise solemnly, and before heaven?' I said. 'I make it solemnly,' he replied. 'And to prove to you that I mean it to be binding upon me, I will confirm it by an oath upon the Bible:' and as he spoke he took the sacred volume from his doublet, and reverently kissed it. Then I said to him—'Sir, you have told me you have a daughter, but you have not told me whether she is marriageable or not?' He started at my question, and answered somewhat sternly—'My daughter has arrived at womanhood. But wherefore the inquiry? Do you seek her hand in marriage?' 'If I did so, would you refuse her to me?' A pause ensued, during which I observed he was struggling with deep emotion, but he replied at last. 'I could not do so after my solemn promise to you; but I pray you not to make the demand.' I then said to him—'Sir, you cannot lay any restrictions upon me. I shall exact fulfilment of your promise. Your daughter must be mine.' Again he seemed to be torn by emotion, and to meditate a refusal; but after a while he suppressed his feelings, and replied, 'My word is plighted. She shall be yours.—Ay, though it cost me my life, she shall be yours.' He then inquired my name and station, and I gave him a different name from that by which I am known; in fact, I adopted one which chanced to be familiar to him, and which instantly changed his feelings towards me into those of warmest friendship. As you may well suppose, I did not think fit to reveal my odious profession; and though I was unmasked, I contrived so to muffle my hateful visage with my

cloak, that it was in a great degree concealed from him. After this, I told him that I had no intention of pressing my demand immediately; that I would take my own means of seeing his daughter without her being conscious of my presence; and that I would not intrude upon her in any way without his sanction. I used some other arguments, which seemed perfectly to satisfy him, and we separated, he having previously acquainted me that he lived at Tottenham. Not many days elapsed before I found an opportunity of viewing his daughter, and I found her exquisitely beautiful. I had indeed gained a prize; and I resolved that no entreaties on his part, or on hers, should induce me to abandon my claim. I took care not to be seen by her, being sensible that any impression I might make would be prejudicial to me; and I subsequently learnt from her father that he had not disclosed to her the promise he had been rash enough to make to me. I had an interview with him—the third and last that ever took place between us—on the morning of the day on which he made an attempt upon the life of the king. I rode over to Tottenham, and arrived there before daybreak. My coming was expected, and he himself admitted me by a private door into his garden, and thence into the house. I perceived that his mind was much disturbed, and he told me he had passed the whole night in prayer. Without acquainting me with his desperate design, I gathered from what he said, that he meditated some fearful act, and that he considered his own life in great jeopardy. If he fell, as he anticipated he should fall, he committed his daughter to my care; and he gave me a written injunction, wherein, as you will find, his blessing is bestowed upon her for obedience to him, and his curse laid upon her in the event of a breach of duty; commanding her, by all her hopes of happiness hereafter, to fulfil the solemn promise he had made me—provided I should claim her hand within a twelvemonth of his death. The unfortunate man, as you know, died within two days of that interview, having, as I have since ascertained, reiterated the same solemn charge, and in terms equally impressive, to his daughter."

"A strange story truly," observed Sir Francis, who had listened attentively to the relation; "but though Aveline may consent to be bound by her father's promise to you, I see not how I can enforce the claim."

"Hugh Calveley, when dying, disclosed no name to his daughter," said Sir Giles. "There is no name mentioned in the paper confided by him to Lanyere; and, possessed of that authority, you will represent the party entitled to make the claim, and can act as Lanyere would have acted."

"She will not resist the demand," said the promoter. "That I can avouch, for I overheard her declare as much to Sir Jocelyn."

A strange smile crossed the extortioner's countenance.

"And do you really think I would give it up thus, Sir Francis?" he said.

"But if we sign that deed—'tis his. How are you to get it back again?"

"Ask me not *how*—I have no time for explanation. Recollect what I told you of Osmond Mounchensey, and the possibility of his reappearance."

"I will not seek to penetrate your scheme, Sir Giles," observed the old usurer; "but I would have you beware of Lanyere. He is cunning and determined."

"He will scarcely prove a match for me, I think," observed the extortioner—"but here he comes."

And as he spoke, the promoter again entered the chamber, followed by Lupo Vulp with a parchment under his arm.

"Give me the deed, good Lupo," said Sir Giles, taking it from him. "It must be first executed by me—there!—and now your signature, Sir Francis," he added, passing the instrument to him. "Now thou shalt witness it, Lupo. 'Tis well!—'tis well!" he cried, snatching it back again, as soon as the scrivener had finished the attestation. "All is done in due form. This deed makes you lord of Mounchensey, Lanyere." And he handed it to him.

"And this makes Sir Francis Mitchell ruler of the destiny of Aveline Calveley," rejoined Lanyere, giving a paper to the old usurer.

"This chest and its contents are yours also, Lanyere," pursued Sir Giles, putting in the deeds, and locking it. "Will it please you to take the key? From this moment we cease to be master and servant, and become equals and friends!"

"Equals it may be, Sir Giles!" cried Lanyere, drawing himself up to his full height, and speaking with great haughtiness; "but never friends."

"Ha! what are we, then?" demanded the extortioner, fiercely. "Am I mistaken in you? Take heed. You are yet in my power."

"Not so, Sir Giles. I have nothing to apprehend from you now," replied Lanyere; "but you have much to fear from me."

So saying, and placing the parchment within his doublet, he hastily quitted the chamber.

"Perdition! have I been outwitted?" cried Sir Giles. "But he shall not escape me." And rushing after him, he called from the head of the great staircase—"What, ho! Captain Bludder!—and ye, Tom Wootton and Cutting Dick—let not Lanyere go forth. Stay him and take from him the deed which he hath placed in his doublet. Cut him down, or stab him if he resists."

But though efforts were made to obey Sir Giles's commands, the promoter effected his retreat.

CHAPTER XLV.

SIR JOCELYN'S RUPTURE WITH DE GONDOMAR.

Far and wide echoed the report of Sir Jocelyn's brilliant achievements at the jousts; and wherever he went, he was hailed as vanquisher of the hitherto unconquered Buckingham. He bore his honours meekly, yet he did not escape calumny; for at a court, as everywhere else, distinguished success is certain to awaken a spirit of envy and detraction. These paltry feelings, however, were entirely confined to the disappointed of his own sex. By fairer and more impartial judges, who had witnessed his exploits, he was spoken of in terms of unmingled admiration; and at the grand revel at Whitehall that followed the jousts, many a soft glance told him how tenderly the gentle heart, whose feelings it betrayed, was inclined towards him. Faithful, loyal, and chivalrous, our young knight was as much proof against these lures as against the ruder attacks of his armed opponents in the lists; and his constancy to the lady of his love remained entirely unshaken. Far rather would he have been with Aveline, in her humble dwelling, than in those superb festal halls, surrounded by all that was noble and beautiful—all that was dangerous and delusive. Far rather would he have received one smile from her, one kindly look, than all the blandishments showered upon him by these enchantresses.

Fain would he have avoided the banquet—but as the hero of the day, he was compelled to attend it. Indeed, he had to enact a principal part at the revel; and so well did he play it, that compliments were lavished upon him, enough to have turned an ordinary head. Not from any desire for ostentatious display, but because Prince Charles had signified to him his wishes on the subject, he was arrayed in all the pearls and ornaments he had won from Buckingham; and more than one subtle courtier, anxious to stand well with him, flatteringly declared that they became him infinitely better than the Marquis. Others, less favourably disposed, remarked that his gem-bedecked doublet was like the garment of Nessus, and would cause its wearer's destruction; and if they could have read Buckingham's secret thoughts, when he beheld his rival so adorned, they would have felt that the observation was not unwarranted. But, though fully determined upon revenge, Buckingham allowed neither look nor word to betray his purpose. On the contrary, he displayed more than his usual affability to Mounchensey, laughed at his own ill-luck, and even went so far as to say that Sir Giles Mompesson had been rightly served; adding, that he blamed himself for including him in his party, and was glad Sir Jocelyn had handled him so rudely.

Though our young knight might well doubt Buckingham's sincerity, he replied to all his courtly speeches in similar terms, and the greatest cordiality appeared to subsist between them. Enchanted with this show of friendship, the King endeavoured to promote it by keeping them near him throughout the evening, leading them to converse together, and fawning upon them, as was his way with those he highly favoured. All this could not fail to be satisfactory to Mounchensey; but he was far more pleased with the notice of Prince Charles, who treated him with marked consideration.

Next morning, in compliance with an invitation to that effect he had received at the revel, Sir Jocelyn repaired to Ely House, in Holborn, the residence of the Spanish Ambassador, and was at once admitted to his presence.

They were alone, and after a few preliminary observations upon the events of the previous day, De Gondomar remarked—"I think I have already afforded you abundant proof of my friendly feeling towards you, Sir Jocelyn. But I will not stop with what I have done. My power of serving you is greater than you may imagine it to be. I can lead you yet higher, and put you in a firmer position. In a word, I can place you on a level with Buckingham—perchance above him—if your ambition soars so high."

Mounchensey endeavoured to express his deep sense of gratitude to the ambassador, and regretted his small means of requiting the numerous and important favours he had received from him.

"I will tell you what to do," said De Gondomar. "You can procure me certain information which I desire to obtain. By my instrumentality you have, in some degree, already obtained the King's confidence, and ere long are sure to become the depositary of many important state secrets. These you shall communicate to me. And you must also use your best endeavours to win Prince Charles over to the Church of Rome."

"Is this proposal seriously made to me, Count?" demanded Mounchensey, looking at him with astonishment, mingled with displeasure.

"Unquestionably it is serious—perfectly serious," replied De Gondomar. "I ask you only to serve me as a certain young nobleman of your acquaintance served me before he was compelled to fly from England to avoid the consequences of a quarrel with his wife's family. Your opportunities will be greater than his, and therefore your service will be more valuable."

"I regret that such disloyalty should be laid to the charge of any English noble," said Sir Jocelyn, sternly. "But think not, because Lord Roos played the spy and traitor, as your Excellency insinuates he did, that I will be guilty of like baseness. Up to this moment I have felt nothing but gratitude to you for the

favours you have heaped upon me; but the feeling is changed to resentment when I understand they are to be purchased at the price of my honour. I cannot accede to your wishes, Count. You must seek out some other tool. I can be none in your hands."

"If this be real, and not affected indignation, Sir Jocelyn," said De Gondomar, coldly, "it would seem that I have been altogether mistaken in you, and that I have been helping you up the ladder only to be kicked aside when you have gained a secure footing. But you have not reached the last step yet, and never will, unless I find you more reasonable. And allow me to ask you, if you are as scrupulous as you profess to be, how you came to bring a token to me from a hired spy—a token intended to let me know you were willing to undertake any secret service I might choose to confide to you? Have you changed your mind since then? or rather, do you not fancy yourself out of danger, and able to dispense with my assistance?"

"I have ever been of the same opinion, Count; have ever been influenced by the same feelings of loyalty and devotion to my Sovereign, and of detestation of all treasonable practices. Had I been aware of the import of the ring I showed your Excellency on our first meeting, I would have hacked off my finger rather than have displayed it. Neither did I know the character of the man who confided it to me, though I ought to have distrusted him. He has played us both false, and for what end I cannot divine."

"I will solve the riddle for you, sir: he thought to serve you," said De Gondomar; "and he has done so, and most effectually, though you are now unwilling to admit it. I have good reason to complain of him—you have none."

"I have more reason for complaint than your Excellency," rejoined Mounchensey. "He has placed me in a most painful and perplexing position."

"There you are right, sir," said De Gondomar. "No matter how arrived at, you are in a position from which you cannot extricate yourself with honour. However disinclined you may be to act in concert with me, you have no other alternative. If I withdraw my support from you, your fall is inevitable. Think not I talk lightly. You are surrounded by enemies, though you discern them not. Buckingham's magnanimous conduct at the revel last night was feigned to mask his purposes towards you. He has not forgiven his defeat, and means to avenge it. You fancy yourself on the high road to preferment; but you are on the verge of disgrace and ruin. I alone can save you. Choose, then, between compliance with my wishes, coupled with present protection and future advancement, and the consequences certain to attend your refusal. Choose, I say, between my friendship and my enmity."

"My answer shall be as prompt and decisive as your proposal, Count," replied Sir Jocelyn. "I at once reject a friendship fettered with such conditions. And that I do not resent the affront put upon me in your dishonourable proposal, must be set down to the obligations you have imposed upon me, and which tie up my hands. But we are now quits; and if any further indignity be offered me, it will not be so lightly borne."

"*Perdone vuestra merced!*—we are not quits," cried De Gondomar, quickly. "The account between us is far from settled; nor will I rest content till you have paid me in full. But we had better break off this interview," he added, more calmly, "since no good is like to result from it. It is useless to reason with you; but you are wantonly throwing away a fairer opportunity than falls to the lot of most men, and will see your folly when too late."

"In taking my leave of your Excellency, as there are no terms henceforth to be observed between us, except those of hostility, I deem it right to state, that though I shall make no especial reference to yourself, I shall hold it my duty to acquaint his Majesty with the system of *espionage* introduced into the palace; and, above all, I shall take care to guard the Prince against the insidious snares laid for him."

"It is a pity so faithful a councillor as yourself should not be listened to," rejoined De Gondomar. "Yet, when I shut the doors of the palace against you—as I will do—you will find it difficult to obtain a hearing either from Prince or King. In spite of all your efforts to the contrary, I shall learn any state secrets I desire to know, and I have great hopes of winning over Charles Stuart to the faith for which his lovely and martyred ancestress died. One more word at parting, Sir Jocelyn. You will remember, when we first met, you were in danger from the Star-Chamber. It would be useless now to say how I saved you from the punishment your rashness had incurred—how, while aiding you with the King, I kept aloof your enemies, Mompesson and Mitchell, who were prepared to attach your person for contempt of that terrible court, and would have done so, if I had not prevented them. The warrant for your arrest still exists, and can be employed at any moment; so you will consider how long you can count upon your freedom, now that you have no strong arm to protect you."

"I have my own arm to trust to," rejoined Sir Jocelyn, resolutely, "and have no apprehensions."

"*Vaya usted con dios!*" said the Spaniard, bowing him out; "or I should rather say," he added to himself, "*Vaya mucho en mala hora!*"

CHAPTER XLVI.

DISGRACE.

Sir Jocelyn was not without great uneasiness at the result of his interview with De Gondomar. Had it been possible, he would have avoided a rupture with so influential a personage—an event to be dreaded at any time, but especially so at a juncture like the present, when dangers menaced him on all sides, and the only question appeared to be, from what side the first blow would come. His chief anxiety, however, was for Aveline, whose position was one of such strange and imminent peril, against which he knew not how to guard her. He was still left in the same state of uncertainty as to who would be the claimant of her hand; for the mysterious personage in the mask had not appeared again, according to his promise, after the jousts. This suspense was terrible; and Sir Jocelyn found it so difficult of endurance, that he would have preferred the actual presence of the calamity by which he was threatened. His fears were, that the claim he so much dreaded would be made by Sir Giles Mompesson in person, and in that case he had determined forcibly to resist him. And this supposition might account for the delay, since he knew that Sir Giles was suffering severely from the effects of the blow he had dealt him in the tilt-yard.

De Gondomar's were not idle threats, as Sir Jocelyn soon found. On the next day, as he entered the palace, he was informed by the Lord Chamberlain that he was deprived of his office of Gentleman of the Bedchamber; and when he demanded the reason of his sudden dismissal, the Duke of Lennox, with a shrug of the shoulders, declared he was unable to afford him any information. But what the Duke refused was afforded by De Gondomar, who at that moment entered the corridor, in company with Buckingham and some other nobles, on his way to the presence-chamber. On seeing his late *protégé*, the ambassador halted for a moment, and with a smile of triumph, said—"You owe your dismissal to me, Sir Jocelyn. I have made some few circumstances concerning you that had just come to my ears known to his Majesty; and as he does not choose to have spies about his person, he has released you from all further attendance upon him."

"In a word, he has forbidden your attendance again at the palace," added Buckingham, who had paused likewise, with an insulting laugh.

"I must to the King, your Grace," cried Sir Jocelyn to the Lord Chamberlain. "I will explain the falsehood of this charge to his Majesty, and show him who is the spy and traitor he has to fear."

"You cannot pass, Sir Jocelyn," said the Duke of Lennox, placing himself in his way, while two halberdiers advanced to bar his passage with their partizans. "I say not a word as to the cause of your disgrace; but I may tell you that his Majesty is greatly offended with you, and that it would be highly imprudent to approach him in his present frame of mind, even were it permitted you to do so—which it is not. As I have said, you are deprived of your office, and enjoined to absent yourself from the palace, till it shall be his Majesty's pleasure to recal you."

"And that is not likely to be soon the case—eh, Count?" observed Buckingham, with a laugh.

"Not very likely, indeed, Marquis," said the ambassador. "I much regret that I have been the means of introducing so unworthy a person to his Majesty; but I have made all the amends in my power."

"Must I tamely endure all these insults and calumnies, your Grace?" cried Sir Jocelyn, furiously.

"If you will be guided by me, you will retire," rejoined the Duke of Lennox; "or the provocation you will receive may induce you to do some desperate act which may render your position worse, and put your restoration to the King's favour entirely out of the question."

While Sir Jocelyn was debating whether he should comply with the Duke's advice, the door of the presence-chamber was thrown open, and James, coming forth from it, marched slowly along the corridor.

Our young knight now fondly hoped that the King might deign to look upon him, and so enable him to plead his cause; and perhaps the Lord Chamberlain himself entertained similar expectations, for he did not insist upon Sir Jocelyn's withdrawal, but allowed him to remain within the corridor, though he was kept aloof by the halberdiers. But both were disappointed. James, no doubt designedly, bestowed his most gracious marks of condescension on Buckingham and De Gondomar, and lingered for a few minutes to laugh and talk with them. After this, as he was passing Sir Jocelyn, he pretended to notice him for the first time, and observed, in a tone of reproof to the Lord Chamberlain, "What doth the spy here, my Lord Duke? I thought you had our orders concerning him. See they are better obeyed in future." And, when the young knight would have spoken, he interrupted him by an imperious gesture, crying out, "Not a word, sir!—not a word! We will hear nought mair frae ye. We hae heard ower meikle already." And he passed on.

Thus was Mounchensey's disgrace accomplished by his enemies.

CHAPTER XLVII.

HOW SIR JOCELYN'S CAUSE WAS ESPOUSED BY THE 'PRENTICES.

Stung almost to madness by the sense of intolerable wrong, our young knight quitted Whitehall, never, as he imagined at the moment, to enter the palace again. Yet he was not humiliated by his disgrace, because he felt it to be wholly unmerited. His enemies had triumphed over him; but he would not have heeded the defeat, provided he could efface the foul stigma cast upon his reputation, and rebut the false charge brought against him by De Gondomar.

With a heart overflowing with rage and bitterness, and with a thousand wild projects passing through his brain, Sir Jocelyn took a boat at Whitehall stairs, and ordered the watermen to row down the river, without assigning any particular place of landing. After a while, he succeeded, to a certain extent, in controlling his angry emotions; and as the watermen rested on their oars for a moment, to inquire his destination, he looked round, and perceiving he was just opposite the Three Cranes in the Vintry, he desired to be put ashore there.

No better retreat wherein to recover his composure seemed to offer itself than Madame Bonaventure's comfortable house of entertainment; and thither, therefore, he proceeded, and at his request was shown into a private room overlooking the river. Scarcely was he installed within it, than the buxom hostess, who had caught sight of him as he mounted the stairs, entered, and in her blandest accents, and with her most bewitching smiles, begged to know his commands; declaring that all that her house possessed was at his service.

She was running on thus, but perceiving the young knight to be much disturbed, she instantly changed her tone, and expressed such genuine concern for him, that he could not fail to be moved by it. Without making her an entire confidante, Sir Jocelyn told her enough of what had occurred to make her comprehend his position; and highly indignant she was at the treatment he had experienced. She did her best to console him; and so far succeeded, that he was prevailed upon to partake of some delicacies which she caused Cyprien to set before him, together with a flask of the best vintage in her cellar; and the discussion of these good things, coupled with the hostess's assiduities, certainly operated as a balm upon his wounded feelings.

The repast over, the good-natured dame thought it best to leave him to himself; and drawing his chair to the open window, he began to ruminate upon the many strange events that had happened to him since he first beheld that fair prospect almost from the same place; and he was indulging in this retrospect,

when his own name, pronounced in tones familiar to him, caught his ear, and looking forth, he perceived Dick Taverner, seated on a bench in front of the house, drinking in company with some half dozen other apprentices, his boon companions.

The conversation of these roysterers was held in so loud a key that it could not fail to reach his ears; and he soon ascertained that his own dismissal from court was the theme of their discourse, and that they rightly attributed it—doubtless owing to information derived from their hostess—to the instrumentality of De Gondomar. It was evidently Dick Taverner's design to rouse the indignation of his companions; and he had little difficulty in accomplishing his purpose, as they were all composed of very inflammable material, and prone to take fire on the slightest application of the match. Dick denounced the plotting and perfidious Spaniard as a traitor to the King and a subverter of the Protestant faith; and counselled vengeance upon him.

Finding Dick's suggestions eagerly caught up by his companions, and that the number of his listeners was momentarily increasing, while all were becoming excited by what the orator uttered, Sir Jocelyn, apprehensive that mischief might ensue, thought it right to interfere, and accordingly, leaning forward from the casement, he made himself known to the group below.

On seeing him, and learning who he was, the 'prentices began to shout and declaim vehemently against the Spanish ambassador; and instigated by Dick Taverner, who refused to listen either to the entreaties or commands of the young knight, the whole party seized their cudgels, and dispersing themselves in different directions, vociferated as they went—"Clubs! clubs!"

It was now as vain to arrest them as it would have been to stop the course of a conflagration; and Sir Jocelyn was deploring the damage which must necessarily be done to his cause by these injudicious friends, when Dick Taverner, with a look of exultation, and brandishing his cudgel, burst into the room, crying—"We have heard all from Madame Bonaventure. We have heard of De Gondomar's perfidy, and his Majesty's injustice. We will set you right. The bold London 'prentices have taken your cause in hand, and will avenge you. They will hang the treacherous Spaniard, and burn his house."

"Hark ye, my good friend, Dick Taverner," said Sir Jocelyn, "this must not be. Because I have been unjustly treated, and may perchance find it difficult, if not impossible, to obtain redress, it does not follow that you and your fellow 'prentices are to violate the law. These riotous proceedings will prejudice my cause rather than aid it; and if you have any regard for me you will use your influence with your comrades to check them ere mischief ensue."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Dick. "The matter has gone too far to be stopped now. You might as well attempt to turn

back a mill-dam that has burst its bounds, as the headstrong London 'prentices when they have taken up their cudgels. Go through with the business they will. This is not the only quarrel we have with De Gondomar. We hate him for his insolence and arrogance, which have been often displayed towards us. We hate him, because he is the sworn enemy of our religion, and would subvert it if he could. As regards myself, I have my own particular reasons for hating him. Do not you meddle with the affair, but leave its arrangement to us."

"But I *must* interfere," cried Sir Jocelyn; "if you act thus, in spite of all my remonstrances, I must regard you in the light of enemies rather than friends, and shall lend my help to quell the disturbance you will occasion. Be ruled by me, good Dickon, and desist from it. Call in your comrades, who are raging about like savage dogs broken loose."

"If they be dogs," rejoined Dick, with a laugh, "the Spanish ambassador is likely enough to become acquainted with their teeth. But I might whistle loudly enough to them before the stanch hounds would come back to me; and, in good sooth, I have no inclination to obey your commands in this instance, Sir Jocelyn."

So saying, and fearing he might be detained altogether, he waited no longer; he darted out of the room, and presently afterwards was heard shouting along the wharf with the loudest of his riotous companions—"No Papists! No Spanish spies! Clubs! —clubs!"

Sir Jocelyn saw that a storm was roused which it would be very difficult to allay; but an effort must be made to do so, even if he were compelled to act against his friends; and he was about to follow the apprentice into the street, when he was prevented by the sudden entrance of a tall personage, wrapped in a black cloak, and masked, whom he at once recognised as the individual who had given him the token to De Gondomar.

"I am glad to have found you, Sir Jocelyn," said this personage. "I have been on the look-out for you to give you a warning. Avoid any place you have been in the habit of frequenting; and above all, go not near Aveline's dwelling. The officers of the Star-Chamber are on the watch for you; and, if found, your arrest is certain."

"I can place little reliance on aught you tell me, sir," rejoined Sir Jocelyn, "after the trick you played me in causing me to deliver that ring to the Conde de Gondomar. Nothing you can say shall hinder me from going forth as I am accustomed to do; and it is my purpose to proceed ere long to the dwelling you specially caution me to avoid."

"You will repent your rashness, young sir," said the other; "but I pray you not to go forth till you have heard certain disclosures which I have to make to you, and which I am well assured will induce you to alter your opinion of me."

"I can put no faith in the statements of a hireling base enough to play the spy for an enemy of his country," rejoined Sir Jocelyn, scornfully. "Stand aside, sir! Your employer, De Gondomar, is in danger from these hot-headed apprentices; and if you owe him any gratitude for past favours, you may find occasion for its display now."

"What! are you about to take part with your enemy and against your friends? These apprentices are about to redress your wrongs—in a lawless manner, it is true—but the circumstances justify their conduct."

"No circumstances can justify outrage and violation of the law," said Sir Jocelyn; "and if injury be attempted against De Gondomar, I must defend him."

"This is mere madness," cried the other. "Stay and hear what I have to say to you! It imports you much to know it."

"Not now," replied Sir Jocelyn, pushing past him. "On some other occasion."

"You are throwing life and liberty away, Sir Jocelyn, and to no purpose," cried the other. "He heeds me not," he added, in a tone of deep disappointment. "Imprudent that he is! he will thwart all the plans I have formed for his benefit, and at the very moment they have arrived at maturity. I must follow and protect him."

And he, too, rushed down the stairs, and made all the haste he could across the Vintry wharf after Sir Jocelyn, who was hurrying up a narrow thoroughfare communicating with Thames-street.

Here a numerous body of 'prentices were already collected, holding a consultation as to their plan of attack. After listening to a brief but stirring harangue from Dick Taverner, who got upon a horse-block for the purpose of addressing them, and recommended them to proceed to Ely House, in Holborn, the residence of the offending ambassador, and there await his return from Whitehall, they approved of his proposal, and unanimously electing Dick as their leader, set forth on their expedition, gathering strength as they went along.

By the time they reached Blackfriars they numbered many hundreds. Little or no interruption was offered them on their route; and the slight hindrance they encountered from a detachment of the city-watch was speedily overborne. Skirting Bridewell, they traversed Shoe-lane, and ascending Holborn-hill, found themselves in the vicinity of Ely House, where they came to a halt, and arranged their forces.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A NOBLE REVENGE.

Nothing could be pleasanter than the situation of the Spanish ambassador's residence, surrounded as it was by noble gardens; but its beauties seemed now likely to be devastated by the blind fury of the apprentices. Much mischief would indeed have been done in a very short time if it had not been for their leader. He authoritatively commanded them to refrain from the work of demolition till they had settled accounts with the ambassador himself, who might be expected each moment, as they had ascertained that he was on his way home from the palace. The information they had received proved to be correct; and ere many minutes elapsed, a magnificent litter, borne by eight stout varlets, and attended by several gentlemen and pages, in the well-known liveries of De Gondomar, was seen to pass through Holborn Bars and advance towards them.

Very soon, however, the bearers of the litter halted, surprised and alarmed at the sight of the crowd investing Ely House; but De Gondomar, who had no apprehension, commanded them to proceed, and they reluctantly obeyed. The 'prentices allowed the litter to come on till they could surround it, when they set up a loud shout, making it evident that mischief was intended.

On this, the gentlemen and pages in attendance upon the ambassador drew their swords and put themselves into a posture of defence, endeavouring to keep off the crowd. But their resistance was of little avail. The 'prentices' clubs quickly shivered their weapons, and drove them back.

When he became aware of the jeopardy in which he stood, De Gondomar, anxious to gain time, in the hope that assistance might arrive, demanded of the leader of the furious-looking crew, who had drawn aside the curtains of his litter, and ordered him in insolent tones to come forth, why they molested him. The individual appealed to replied that, having heard of his infamous usage of Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey, and of the false accusation he had brought against him to the King, they were determined to inflict upon his Excellency the punishment due to public and notorious slanderers.

"And by what right do you constitute yourselves my judges?" cried De Gondomar. "Take heed what you do—you may bring yourselves within reach of a halter."

"You hear what he says, brother 'prentices?" cried Dick Taverner. "He threatens to hang us, and no doubt if he could carry out his schemes, and bring back the Pope's authority, he would burn us in Smithfield, as they did the holy martyrs in

Mary's days. He has charged a true and loyal subject of his Majesty with being a spy. In return, we tell *him* he is the worst of spies—a spy employed by the Pope; and we will teach him the danger of his employment."

"Hands off, base varlets!" exclaimed De Gondomar, endeavouring to shake himself free from the rude grasp imposed upon him.

But, in spite of his resistance, he was dragged from the litter, while a shower of blows from the 'prentices' cudgels fell upon his shoulders; and it is probable he would have experienced much severer treatment, if indeed he had escaped with life, if at this moment Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey, sword in hand, and followed by Clement Lanyere, had not burst through the throng.

"Ha! as I suspected," cried De Gondomar. "You, Mounchensey, are the author and instigator of this outrage, and are come to see that your tools do their work properly."

"It is false," cried Dick Taverner. "Your Excellency judges of others by yourself. Sir Jocelyn would have checked us if he could."

"I cannot be expected to believe such an assertion as this,' cried De Gondomar, incredulously.

"Let my actions speak for me," cried Mounchensey. "Friends," he called out, "it is undoubtedly true that I have good ground of complaint against the Conde de Gondomar—that he has deeply injured me—and that I will compel him to make me reparation in due season—but I cannot permit outrage to be offered him; and if aught further be attempted, my arm will be raised in his defence."

"How! can this be possible!" exclaimed De Gondomar, in surprise.

"Why, we are fighting Sir Jocelyn's battles, and he turns round upon us!" cried a burly 'prentice, while loud murmurs arose from the others, and the cudgels were again brandished menacingly.

"Leave him to us, Sir Jocelyn," said Dick Taverner.

"Ay, he had better not interfere, or he will come in for his share of the blows," roared several voices.

"I care not what befals me," shouted Mounchensey. "You shall not injure a hair of his Excellency's head while I stand by."

And, as he spoke, he warded off several blows aimed at the ambassador.

"I am with you, Sir Jocelyn," said Clement Lanyere, clearing a space around them with his long rapier, but avoiding, so far as possible, doing injury to the 'prentices.

At this critical juncture, and when it seemed likely that, owing to his chivalrous interference, Sir Jocelyn would share the ambassador's fate, he being fairly resolved, as he showed, to

defend him with his life, a cry was raised that a body of the royal guards were approaching; and as the trampling of horse, accompanied by the clatter of swords, left no doubt of the fact, and as, moreover, the bold 'prentices felt no disposition to encounter regular soldiery, they instantly abandoned their prey and took to their heels, the chief part of them leaping the hedge which then grew along the north side of Holborn, and scouring off through the fields in every direction. Some half dozen were made prisoners by the guard; and amongst these, we regret to state, was the leader of the riotous assembly, Dick Taverner.

"Thou art likely to make acquaintance with the pillory and the cart's tail, if not with the hangman, friend," said the soldier who secured him, with a laugh.

"So I begin to fear," replied Dick. "Alack! and well-a-day! what will become of Gillian!"

"An that be thy mistress's name, friend, you should have thought of her before you engaged in this disturbance. You are likely now to part company with her for ever."

While Dick lamented the predicament in which he had placed himself, the Conde de Gondomar, freed from all apprehension, turned towards his deliverer, and, proffering him his hand, said, "You have nobly revenged yourself, Sir Jocelyn. I trust we may be friends once more. I will make you ample reparation for the wrong I have done you."

But the young knight, folding his arms upon his breast, sternly replied, "When reparation is made, Count, I may accept your hand, but not till then."

"At least enter my house," urged the ambassador, "where you will be protected from arrest."

"Do not hesitate, Sir Jocelyn," subjoined Lanyere; "you are in great peril."

But the young knight haughtily refused.

"I will not owe an asylum to you, Count," he said, "till my name be cleared from reproach." And with a proud salutation, he departed.

The Spanish ambassador shrugged his shoulders, and looked after him with mingled admiration and contempt. He then turned to the promoter, and said, "Come in with me, Lanyere; I have somewhat to say to you."

"I must pray your Excellency to excuse me, just now," replied the other; "I have business on hand."

And, bowing with nearly as much haughtiness as Sir Jocelyn, he followed in the course taken by the young knight.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A PLACE OF REFUGE.

After quitting De Gondomar, as before related, Sir Jocelyn hurried along Holborn, with the intention of proceeding to Aveline's cottage, which was at no great distance from Ely House, though in a secluded situation, withdrawn from the road; and he was just about to strike into the narrow lane leading to it, when he was arrested by the voice of Clement Lanyere, who had followed him, unobserved.

"Stay, Sir Jocelyn, I beg of you," cried the promoter, coming quickly up to him; "you are rushing on certain destruction. You must not go nigh that cottage to-day; no, nor for several days to come. Foes are lying in ambush round it; and the only spectacle you will afford her you love will be that of your arrest."

There was an earnestness in the speaker's manner that could not fail to carry conviction of his sincerity to the breast of his hearer.

"By my soul! I speak the truth," said Lanyere, perceiving the impression he had made, "as you will find if you go many steps farther. Place yourself in my hands, and I will save you."

"What motive can you have for acting thus?" demanded Sir Jocelyn. "What interest do you take in me?"

"Do not question me now: you shall have full explanation hereafter. Be satisfied I am a friend,—perchance your best friend. Come with me, and I will take you to a place of safety."

"But what is to happen to Aveline?" cried the young knight, in deep anxiety.

"I will endeavour to watch over her," replied the promoter; "and I trust no harm will befal her. At all events, you will deprive yourself of the power of rendering her any protection, if you are rash enough to go forward now."

Struck by the force of these remarks, our young knight felt he had no alternative but to submit to circumstances, and he accordingly agreed to accept the aid proffered him by his mysterious friend. But it was not without feelings of intense anguish that he turned away from the path leading to the little secluded cottage containing all he held dear, and followed his conductor, who seemed resolved to allow him no time for further hesitation, but proceeded at a rapid pace towards the west till he reached Broad Saint Giles's—then a rural village—and entered a small tavern, bearing the sign of "The Rose and Crown," the landlord of which appeared to have an understanding with the promoter, for at a sign from him he immediately ushered his guests into a chamber up-stairs, and, without saying a word, left them alone together.

"Here you will be secure and undisturbed," said Lanyere; "and all your wants will be cared for by my trusty ally, Barnabas Boteler; but, for your own sake, you must consent to remain a close prisoner, till I bring you word that you may go forth with safety. I must now leave you, having much to do, and must defer the explanations I design to give you to a more convenient season. Be not uneasy if you should not see me for a few days, as circumstances may prevent my coming to you. When I next appear, I trust it may be to bring you good tidings. Till then, farewell."

And without waiting for any reply from Sir Jocelyn, he hastily departed.

Left alone, our young knight did the best he could to reconcile himself to the strange situation in which he was placed. He was naturally full of anxiety, both on his own account, and on that of Aveline; yet, on calm reflection, he felt satisfied he had acted for the best, and that, in accepting the protection of the mysterious individual who seemed bent upon directing his fortunes, he had followed the dictates of prudence. Barnabas Boteler attended him in person, and suffered no one else to come near him; but though the worthy host seemed anxious to anticipate his wants in every particular, his manner was reserved, and, in Sir Jocelyn's opinion, he had something of the look of a jailor, and this notion was strengthened when he found himself locked in his room. Probably this was only done as a precautionary measure by the host; but as the window was at no great height from the ground, and he could descend from it when he chose, he gave himself no great concern about the matter.

In this way three days passed by without anything occurring to break the monotony of his wearisome confinement,—not even a visit from Clement Lanyere. To Sir Jocelyn's inquiries concerning him, the host professed utter inability to give a precise answer, but said that he might arrive at any moment. As he did not appear, however, on the fourth day, Sir Jocelyn's patience got quite worn out, and his uneasiness respecting Aveline having become insupportable, he determined, at all hazards, on visiting her cottage. Without acquainting the host with his intention, or asking to have the door unfastened, he opened the window, which looked into a garden at the back of the house, and sprang from it. His furtive departure did not appear to be noticed, and he soon gained the road, and took the direction of Aveline's dwelling

CHAPTER L.

THE ARREST.

As he approached the cottage, a heavy presentiment of ill seized Sir Jocelyn. The place seemed to have lost its customary smiling air. No fair countenance beamed upon him from the casement; no light footsteps were heard hastening to the door; no one opened it to give him welcome. Could Aveline have fled?—or had some dire misfortune happened to her? Suspense was worse than certainty of ill: and after a moment's hesitation, he raised the latch, and with trembling footsteps crossed the threshold.

She was gone—he could no longer doubt it. The disordered appearance of the chamber in which he found himself, with its furniture scattered about, seemed to tell of a struggle, and a forcible abduction. Nevertheless, though expecting no answer, he called forth her name in accents of wildest despair. She came not to his cries—neither she nor her companion, Dame Sherborne, nor her faithful attendant, old Anthony Rocke. All were gone. The house was indeed desolate.

Still clinging to hope, he flew up-stairs, but could find no traces there of any of the inmates of the dwelling; and with a heart now completely crushed, he descended to the chamber he had just quitted. Here he found Clement Lanyere surveying the scene of confusion around him with a stern and troubled look. Sir Jocelyn instantly rushed up to him, and, seizing him by the arm, fiercely demanded what had become of Aveline?

"She is in the hands of Sir Francis Mitchell," replied the promoter, shaking him off; "and, for aught I know, may be wedded to him by this time."

"Wedded!" almost shrieked the young man. "Impossible! she would never consent—and he would not dare have recourse to violence."

"Though he might not, his partner, Sir Giles Mompesson, would have no such scruples," returned the promoter. "But perhaps you are right, and Aveline's determined resistance may intimidate them both so that they may abandon their design. I hope so, for your sake, and for hers also—but I have my fears."

"You know more than you choose to avow, sir," said Sir Jocelyn, sternly,—"and as you value your life, I command you to speak plainly, and tell me what has happened, and where I shall find Aveline."

"So commanded by any other than yourself, Sir Jocelyn," rejoined the promoter, "I would *not* speak; but to you I say, as I have before declared, that Aveline is undoubtedly in the power of Sir Francis Mitchell, and that it will rest entirely with herself whether she escapes him or not."

"And you have caused me to be detained while she has been carried off!" exclaimed Sir Jocelyn, furiously. "Fool that I was to trust you! You are in league with the villains."

"Think of me what you please, and say what you will—you shall not anger me," rejoined the promoter. "I discovered your flight from the place of refuge I had procured for you, and guessing where you had come, followed you hither. Your danger is not past. Vainly will you seek Sir Francis Mitchell. You will not find him,—but you *will* find a serjeant-at-arms with a Star-Chamber warrant for your arrest; to this you can offer no resistance. And what will follow? I will tell you:—immediate incarceration in the Fleet Prison. And when safely lodged there, how, may I ask, are you to liberate Aveline?"

"I must trust to chance," replied Sir Jocelyn. "I can no longer place any reliance upon you. Stand aside, and let me pass. I would not harm you."

"You cannot injure one whose intentions are friendly to you as mine are. Listen to me, and let what I have to say sink deeply into your breast. Do anything rather than render yourself amenable to the accursed tribunal I have named. Abandon mistress, friend, relative—all who are near and dear to you—if they would bring you within its grasp."

"And do you venture to give me this shameful counsel? Do you think I will attend to it?" cried Sir Jocelyn.

"I am sure you will, if you hear me out—and you *shall* hear me," the promoter exclaimed with so much authority that the young man, however impatient, could not refuse attention to him "Look me in the face, Sir Jocelyn! Regard me well! Behold these ineffaceable marks, made by the heated iron and the sharpened knife! How came they there? From a sentence of the Star-Chamber. And as my offence was the same as yours, so your sentence will correspond with mine—branding and mutilation. Ha! I perceive I have touched you now."

"What was your offence, unhappy man?" asked Sir Jocelyn, averting his gaze from the hideous aspect which, now lighted up with mingled emotions of rage and despair, had become absolutely appalling.

"The same as your own, as I have said," replied the other; "a few hasty words impugning the justice of this vindictive court. Better had I cut out my tongue than have given utterance to them. But my case more nearly resembles yours than I have yet explained, for, like you, I had incurred the displeasure of Sir Giles Mompesson, and was by him delivered to these hellish tormentors. Acting under cover of the Star-Chamber, and in pursuance of its iniquitous decrees, he nailed me to the pillory, and so fast, that the ears through which the spikes were driven, were left behind. Think how you would like that, Sir Jocelyn? Think what you would feel, if you stood there, on that infamous

post, a spectacle to the base and shouting rabble, with a paper fastened to your breast, setting forth your crimes, and acquainting all that you were a Star-Chamber delinquent?"

"Enough, sir," interrupted Sir Jocelyn.

"Ay, enough—more than enough," rejoined the other; "but I cannot spare you the whole of the recital, however painful it may be to you. My own sufferings will be yours, if you heed not. So I shall go on. In robbing me of my ears, the executioner had only half done his work. He had still further to deface the image of his Maker,—and he hesitated not in his task. No savage in the wilds could have treated his deadliest enemy worse than he treated me; and yet the vile concourse applauded him, and not a word of pity escaped them. My sentence was fully carried out. My features were for ever disfigured, and the letters of shame indelibly stamped upon my cheek. You may read them there now if you will look at me."

"You thrill me with horror!" said Sir Jocelyn.

"Ay, mine is not a mirthful history, though that fiend in human form, Sir Giles, hath often laughed at it," rejoined the promoter. "It might make you shudder, and perchance move you to tears, if you could hear it all; but for the present, I shall confine myself to such portions of it as bear upon your own perilous position, and I therefore hold myself out as a lesson to you. Again I bid you look upon this ravaged countenance, and say if by any stretch of fancy you can persuade yourself it was once as comely as your own. You find it difficult to believe my words—yet such was the fact. Ay," he continued, in a tone of profoundest melancholy, "I was once proud of the gifts nature had vouchsafed me; too proud, alas! and I was punished for my vanity and self-boasting. In those days I loved, and was beloved in return by a damsel beautiful as Aveline. After my horrible punishment, I beheld her no more. Knowing she must regard me with aversion, I shunned her. I desired not to be an object of pity. Bring this home to your own breast, Sir Jocelyn, and think how direful would be your lot to be driven for ever from her you love. Yet such has been my case."

"I cannot bear the contemplation—it were madness!" cried the young man.

There was a brief pause, after which Lanyere resumed his story.

"At the time of being cast into the Fleet Prison, my prospects were fair enough. When I came forth, I was utterly ruined. Existence was a burden to me, and I should have ended my days by my own hand, if the insatiable desire of vengeance had not bound me to the world. For this alone I consented to live—to bear the agonies of blighted love—to endure the scorn and taunts of all with whom I was brought into contact. Nay, I attached myself to him who had so deeply wronged me, to ensure revenge

upon him. My great fear was, lest I should be robbed of this precious morsel; and you remember that I struck up your sword when it had touched his breast. He must die by no other hand than mine."

"Your vengeance has been tardy," observed Sir Jocelyn.

"True," replied the other. "I have delayed it for several reasons, but chiefly because I would have it complete. The work is begun, and its final accomplishment will not be long postponed. I will not destroy him till I have destroyed the superstructure on which he has built his fortunes—till all has crumbled beneath him—and he is beggared and dishonoured. I have begun the work, I say. Look here!" he cried, taking a parchment from his doublet. "You would give much for this deed, Sir Jocelyn. This makes me lord of a large property in Norfolk, with which you are well acquainted."

"You cannot mean the Mounchensey estates?" cried Sir Jocelyn. "Yet now I look at the instrument, it is so."

"I obtained this assignment by stratagem," said the promoter; "and I have thereby deprived Sir Giles of the most valuable portion of his spoils; and though he thinks to win it back again, he will find himself deceived. My measures are too well taken. This is the chief prop of the fabric it has taken him so long to rear, and ere long I will shake it wholly in pieces."

"But if you have become unlawfully possessed of this property, as would appear to be the case by your own showing, you cannot hope to retain it," said the young knight.

"Trust me, Sir Jocelyn, I shall prove a better title to it than Sir Giles could exhibit," rejoined Lanyere; "but this is not a time for full explanation. If I carry out my schemes, you will not be the last person benefited by them."

"Again I ask you, what possible interest you can feel in me?" demanded the young knight, with curiosity.

"Next to myself, you have been most injured by Sir Giles, and even more than myself are you an object of dislike to him. These would suffice to excite my sympathy towards you; but I have other and stronger reasons for my friendly feeling towards you, which in due season you shall know."

"All your proceedings are mysterious," observed Sir Jocelyn.

"They must needs be so, from the circumstances in which I am placed. I am compelled to veil them, as I do my hateful features, from the prying eyes of men: but they will be made clear anon, and you will then understand me and my motives better. Ha! what is this?" he suddenly exclaimed, as a noise outside attracted his attention. "Fly! fly! there is danger."

But the warning was too late. Ere the young man, who stood irresolute, could effect his retreat from the back of the cottage, the door was thrown open, and a serjeant-at-arms, with three attendants in black gowns and flat caps, and having black staves in their hands, entered the room.

Sir Jocelyn had partly drawn his sword, but restored it to the scabbard on a glance from Lanyere.

"Resistance must not be offered," said the latter, in a low tone. "You will only make a bad matter worse."

The serjeant-at-arms, a tall, thin man, with a sinister aspect, advanced towards the young knight, and touching him with his wand, said—"I attach your person, Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey, in virtue of a warrant which I hold from the High Court of Star-Chamber."

"I yield myself your prisoner, sir," replied Sir Jocelyn. "Whither am I to be taken?"

"You will be taken before the Lords of the Council, in the first instance, and afterwards, in all probability, be consigned to the custody of the wardens of his Majesty's gaol of the Fleet," replied the serjeant-at-arms.

"I would fain know the nature of my offence!" said Sir Jocelyn.

"You will learn that when the interrogatories are put to you," replied the official. "But I am told you have disparaged the dignity of the High Court, and that is an offence ever severely punished. Your accuser is Sir Giles Mompesson."

Having said thus much, the serjeant-at-arms turned to the promoter, and inquired, "Are you not Clement Lanyere?"

"Why do you ask?" rejoined the other.

"Because if you are he, I must request you to accompany me to Sir Giles Mompesson."

"Lanyere is my name," replied the other; "and if I decline to attend you, as you request, it is from no disrespect to you, but from distaste to the society into which you propose to bring me. Your warrant does not extend to me?"

"It does not, sir," replied the serjeant-at-arms. "Nevertheless——"

"Arrest him!" cried a voice at the back of the house,—and a window being thrown open, the face of Sir Giles Mompesson appeared at it.—"Arrest him!" repeated the extortioner.

The serjeant-at-arms made a movement, as if of compliance; but Lanyere bent towards him, and whispered a few words in his ear, on hearing which the official respectfully retired.

"Why are not my injunctions obeyed, sir?" demanded Sir Giles, furiously, from the window.

"Because he has rendered me good reason why he may not be molested by us—or by any one else," replied the officer, significantly.

Lanyere looked with a smile of triumph at the extortioner, and then turning to Sir Jocelyn, who seemed half disposed to make an attack upon his enemy, said in an under-tone, "Harm him not. Leave him to me."

After which he quitted the cottage.

Sir Giles then signed to the serjeant-at-arms to remove his prisoner, and disappeared; and the attendants, in sable cloaks, closing round Sir Jocelyn, the party went forth.

CHAPTER LI.

THE OLD FLEET PRISON.

MENTION is made of a prison-house standing near the River Fleet as early as the reign of Richard I.; and this was one of the oldest jails in London, as its first wardens whose names are on record, Nathaniel de Leveland, and Robert, his son, paid, in 1198, a fine of sixty marks for its custody; affirming "that it had been their inheritance ever since the Conquest, and praying that they might not be hindered therein by the counter-fine of Osbert de Longchamp," to whom it had been granted by the lion-hearted monarch.

The next warden of the Fleet, in the days of John, was Simon Fitzrobert, Archdeacon of Wells,—probably a near relative of Robert de Leveland, as the wardship of the daughter of the said Robert, as well as the custody of the jail, was also committed to him. The freehold of the prison continued in the Leveland family for upwards of three centuries; until, in the reign of Philip and Mary, it was sold to John Heath for £2300 —a large sum in those days, but not more than the value of the property, which, from the way it was managed, produced a large revenue to its possessor.

The joint wardens of the Fleet at the time of our history were Sir Henry Lello and John Eldred; but their office was executed by deputy in the person of Joachim Tunstall, by whom it was rented. As will naturally be supposed, it was the object of every deputy-warden to make as much as he could out of the unfortunate individuals committed to his charge; and some idea of the infamous practices of those persons may be gathered from a petition presented to the Lords of the Council in 1586 by the then prisoners of the Fleet. In this it is stated that the warden had "let and set to farm the victualling and lodging of all the house and prison of the Fleet to one John Harvey, and the other profits of the said Fleet he had let to one Thomas Newport, the deputy there under the warden; and these being very poor men, having neither land nor any trade to live by, nor any certain wages of the said warden, and being also greedy of gain, did live by bribing and extortion. That they did most shamefully extort and exact from the prisoners, raising new customs, fines, and payments, for their own advantage. That they cruelly used them, shutting them up in close prisons

when they found fault with their wicked dealings; not suffering them to come and go as they ought to do; with other abominable misdemeanours, which, without reformation, might be the poor prisoners' utter undoing."

In consequence of this petition, a commission of inquiry into the alleged abuses was appointed; but little good was effected by it, for only seven years later, further complaints were made against the warden, charging him with "murders and other grave misdemeanours." Still no redress was obtained; nor was it likely it would be, when the cries of the victims of this abominable system of oppression were so easily stifled. The most arbitrary measures were resorted to by the officers of the prison, and carried out with perfect impunity. Their authority was not to be disputed; and it has been shown how obedience was enforced. Fines were inflicted, and payment made compulsory, so that the wealthy prisoner was soon reduced to beggary. Resistance to the will of the jailers, and refusal to submit to their exactions, were severely punished. Loaded with fetters, and almost deprived of food, the miserable captive was locked up in a noisome subterranean dungeon; and if he continued obstinate, was left to rot there. When he expired, his death was laid to the jail-fever. Rarely were these dark prison secrets divulged, though frequently hinted at.

The moral condition of the prisoners was frightful. As the greater portion of them consisted of vicious and disorderly characters, these contaminated the whole mass, so that the place became a complete sink of abomination. Drunkenness, smoking, dicing, card-playing, and every kind of licence were permitted, or connived at; and the stronger prisoners were allowed to plunder the weaker. Such was the state of things in the Fleet Prison at the period of our history, when its misgovernment was greater than it had ever previously been, and the condition of its inmates incomparably worse.

During the rebellion of Wat Tyler, the greater part of the buildings constituting the ancient prison were burnt down, and otherwise destroyed; and, when rebuilt, the jail was strengthened and considerably enlarged. Its walls were of stone, now grim and hoary with age; and on the side next to the Fleet there was a large square structure, resembling Traitor's Gate at the Tower, and forming the sole entrance to the prison. To this gate state-offenders were brought by water after committal by the Council of the Star-Chamber.

Nothing could be sterner or gloomier than the aspect of the prison on this side—grey and frowning walls, with a few sombre buildings peeping above them, and a black gateway, with a yawning arch, as if looking ready to devour the unfortunate being who approached it. Passing through a wicket, contrived in the ponderous door, a second gate was arrived at, and this

brought the captive to the porter's lodge, where he was delivered up to the jailers, and assigned a room in one of the wards, according to his means of paying for it. The best of these lodgings were but indifferent; and the worst were abominable and noisome pits.

On entering the outer ward, a strange scene presented itself to the view. Motley groups were scattered about—most of the persons composing them being clad in threadbare doublets and tattered cloaks, and wearing caps from which the feathers and ornaments had long since disappeared; but there were a few—probably new comers—in somewhat better attire. All these were debtors. Recklessness and effrontery were displayed on their countenances, and their discourse was full of ribaldry and profanity. At one side of this ward there was a large kitchen, where eating and drinking were constantly going forward at little tables, as at a tavern or cookshop, and where commons were served out to the poorer prisoners.

Near this was a large hall, which served as the refectory of the prisoners for debt. It was furnished with side benches of oak, and had two long tables of the same wood; but both benches and tables were in a filthy state, and the floor was never cleansed. Indeed, every part of the prison was foul enough to breed a pestilence; and the place was seldom free from fever in consequence. The upper part of the refectory was traversed by a long corridor, on either side of which were the dormitories.

The arrangements of the inner ward were nearly similar, and differed only from the outer in so far that the accommodations were superior, as they had need to be, considering the price asked for them; but even here nothing like cleanliness could be found. In this ward was the chapel. At a grated window in the gate stood the poor debtors rattling their begging-boxes, and endeavouring by their cries to obtain alms from the passers-by

Below the warden's lodgings, which adjoined the gate, and which were now occupied by the deputy, Joachim Tunstall, was a range of subterranean dungeons, built below the level of the Fleet. Frequently flooded by the river, these dungeons were exceedingly damp and unwholesome; and they were reserved for such prisoners as had incurred the censure of the inexorable Court of Star-Chamber. It was in one of the deepest and most dismal of these cells that the unfortunate Sir Ferdinando Mounchensey had breathed his last.

Allusion has been previously made to the influence exercised within the Fleet by Sir Giles Mompesson. Both the wardens were his friends, and ever ready to serve him; their deputy was his creature, and subservient to his will in all things; while the jailers and their assistants took his orders, whatever they might be, as if from a master. Thus he was enabled to tyrannize over the objects of his displeasure, who could never be secure from his malice.

By the modes of torture he adopted through his agents, he could break the most stubborn spirit, and subdue the strongest. It was matter of savage satisfaction to him to witness the sufferings of his victims; and he never ceased from persecution till he had obtained whatever he desired. The barbarities carried out in pursuance of the atrocious sentences of the Court of Star-Chamber were to him pleasant spectacles; and the bleeding and mutilated wretches whom his accusations had conducted to the pillory, when brought back to their dungeons, could not escape his hateful presence—worse to them from his fiendish derision of their agonies than that of the executioner.

CHAPTER LII.

HOW SIR JOCELYN WAS BROUGHT TO THE FLEET.

After his arrest by the serjeant-at-arms, Sir Jocelyn was taken, in the first instance, to the Star-Chamber, where some of the Lords of the Council were sitting at the time, and examined respecting the "libellous language and false scandal" he had used in reference to the proceedings of that high and honourable court. The young knight did not attempt to deny the truth of the charge brought against him, neither did he express contrition, or sue for forgiveness; but though he demanded to be confronted with his accusers, the request was refused him; and he was told they would appear in due time. Several interrogatories were then addressed to him, which he answered in a manner calculated, in the judgment of his hearers, to aggravate the original offence. After this, he was required to subscribe the minutes of his confession, as it was styled; and a warrant for his committal to the Fleet Prison, and close confinement within it, was made out.

Consigned once more to the custody of the serjeant-at-arms, he was placed on board a barge, of ill-omened appearance, being covered with black cloth, like a Venetian gondola, and kept for offenders against the Star-Chamber. In this he was rowed down the Thames, and up the Fleet, to the entrance of the prison. The progress of the well-known sable barge up the narrow river having been noted by the passengers along its banks, as well as by those crossing Fleet Bridge, some curiosity was felt to ascertain whom it contained; and a crowd collected in front of the prison-gate to witness the disembarkation.

When the young knight's title, and the nature of his offence, which latter did not appear so enormous in their eyes as in those of the Lords of the Council, became known to the bystanders, much sympathy was expressed for him; and it might have found

a manifestation in more than words, but for the guard, who kept back the throng.

At this juncture, Sir Jocelyn heard his own name pronounced in familiar tones, and looking round for the speaker, perceived a person placed in a tub close behind him. The individual who occupied this singular and degrading position was the ill-starred Dick Taverner, who, it appeared, had made an attempt to escape from prison on the third day after he had been brought thither, and was punished, according to the custom of the place, by being bound hand and foot, set within a tub, and exposed to public gaze and derision.

"Alas! Sir Jocelyn!" ejaculated the apprentice, "but for you I should not have been here. I undertook a thankless office, and have been rightly served for my folly. We have both found our way to the Fleet, but I much doubt if either of us will find his way out of it. As for me, I liked the appearance of the place, and the society it seems to furnish, so little, that I resolved to make a clearance of it at once; and accordingly I managed to scramble up yonder lofty wall, in the hope of effecting my deliverance, without asking for a licence to go abroad from the warden; but, unfortunately, in dropping down from so great a height, I sprained my ankle, and fell again into the hands of the Philistines—and here I am, like the Cynic philosopher in his tub."

Sir Jocelyn would have addressed a few words of consolation to the poor fellow, but at this moment the wicket was opened, and he was pushed through it by the attendants of the serjeant-at-arms, who were apprehensive of the crowd. The small aperture that had given him admittance to the prison was instantly closed, and all chance of rescue cut off.

The prisoner being thus effectually secured, the officials felt more easy; and smiling at each other, they proceeded deliberately to the porter's lodge, at the entrance of which stood a huge, powerfully-built, ill-favoured man, evidently chosen for the post of porter from his personal strength and the savageness of his disposition.

With a growl like that of a mastiff, to the black broad muzzle of which animal his own features bore a remarkable resemblance, the porter greeted the new comers, and ushered them into an apartment built of stone, octagonal in shape, with a vaulted roof, narrow windows like loopholes, and a great stone fireplace. Its walls, which resembled those of an ancient guard-room, were appropriately enough garnished with fetters; mixed up with which, as if to inspire greater terror among the beholders, were an executioner's heavy whip, with many knotted thongs, several knives, with strange blades, the purpose of which was obvious enough, and branding-irons.

As Sir Jocelyn was brought into the lodge by his guards an

elderly man, with a bald head and grey beard and moustaches, and possessing, in spite of his years, a most repulsive physiognomy, advanced to meet him. His doublet and hose were of murrey-colour; and his inflamed visage, blood-shot eyes, fiery nose, and blotchy forehead, were in keeping with the hue of his apparel. This was Joachim Tunstall, deputy-warden of the Fleet.

Behind him were some half-dozen jailers, attired in garments of dark-brown frieze, and each having a large bunch of keys at his girdle. All of them were stout, hard-featured men, and bore upon their countenances the stamp of their vocation.

The warrant for Sir Jocelyn's committal to the Fleet was delivered by the serjeant-at-arms to the deputy-warden; and the latter, having duly perused it, was conferring with one of the jailers as to where the prisoner should be conducted, when a side-door was suddenly opened, and Sir Giles Mompesson issuing from it, tapped the deputy-warden on the shoulder.

"You need not consider where the prisoner is to be lodged, Master Tunstall," he said, looking fixedly at Mounchensey all the while. "The dungeon he is to occupy is the darkest, the deepest, and the dampest in the Fleet. It is that in which his father died. You know it well, Grimbald," he added, to one of the burliest of the jailers. "Take him thither at once, and I will go with you to see him safely bestowed."

"Pass on, sir," he continued, with a smile of fiendish satisfaction, as Mounchensey was led forth by the jailer.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE ABDUCTION.

Night had come on, and Aveline was anxiously expecting the arrival of her lover, when a loud knocking was heard at the door of the cottage; and before the summons could be answered by Anthony Rocke, two persons entered, and pushing past the old serving-man, who demanded their business, and vainly endeavoured to oppose their progress, forced their way into the presence of his mistress. Dame Sherborne was in an inner room, but, alarmed by the noise, she flew to the aid of her charge, and reached her at the same moment with the intruders. Her lamp threw its light full upon their countenances; and when she found who they were, she screamed and nearly let it fall, appearing to stand much more in need of support than Aveline herself.

The foremost of the two was Sir Giles Mompesson, and his usually stern and sinister features had acquired a yet more inauspicious cast from the deathlike paleness that bespread them, as well as from the fillet bound round his injured brow. The other

was an antiquated coxcomb, aping the airs and graces of a youthful gallant, attired in silks and velvets fashioned in the newest French mode, and exhaling a mingled perfume of civet, musk, and ambergris; and in him Aveline recognised the amorous old dotard who had stared at her so offensively during the visit she had been forced to make to the extortioner.

Sir Francis's deportment was not a whit less impertinent or objectionable now than heretofore. After making a profound salutation to Aveline, which he thought was executed in the most courtly style, and with consummate grace, he observed in a loud whisper to his partner, "'Fore heaven! a matchless creature! a divinity! Introduce me in due form, Sir Giles."

"Suffer me to make known to you Sir Francis Mitchell, fair mistress," said Mompesson. "He is so ravished by your charms that he can neither eat, drink, nor sleep; and he professes to me, his friend and partner, that he must die outright unless you take pity on him. Is it not so, Sir Francis? Nay, plead your own cause, man. You will do it better than I, who am little accustomed to tune my voice to the ear of beauty."

During this speech, the old usurer conducted himself in a manner that, under other circumstances, must have moved Aveline's mirth; but it now only excited her disgust and indignation. Sighing, groaning, placing his hand upon his heart, languishingly regarding her, and turning up his eyes till the whites alone were visible, he ended by throwing himself at her feet, seizing her hand, and attempting to cover it with kisses.

"Deign to listen to me, peerless and adorable damsel!" he cried, in the most impassioned accents he could command, though he wheezed terribly all the while, and was ever and anon interrupted by a fit of coughing. "Incline your ear to me, I beseech you. Sir Giles has in no respect exaggerated my sad condition. Ever since I beheld you I have been able to do nothing else than—(ough! ough!)—dwell upon your surpassing attractions. Day and night your lovely image has been constantly before me. You have driven sleep from my eyelids, and rest from my—(ough! ough!)—frame. Your lustrous eyes have lighted up such a fire in my breast as can never be extinguished, unless—(ough! ough! ough!)—plague take this cough! I owe it to you, fair mistress of my heart, as well as my other torments. But, as I was about to say, the raging flame you have kindled in my breast will utterly consume me, unless—(ough! ough! ough!)"

Here he was well-nigh choked, and Sir Giles had to come to his assistance.

"What my worthy friend and partner would declare, if his cough permitted him, fair Mistress Aveline," urged the extortioner, "is that he places his life and fortune at your disposal. His desires are all centred in you, and it rests with you to make

him the happiest or most miserable of mankind. Speak I not your sentiments, Sir Francis?"

"In every particular, good Sir Giles," replied the other, as soon as he could recover utterance. "And now, most adorable damsel, what say you in answer? You are too gentle, I am sure, to condemn your slave to endless tortures. Nay, motion me not to rise. I have that to say will disarm your frowns, and turn them into smiles of approval and assent. ('O, this accursed rheumatism!' he muttered to himself, 'I shall never be able to get up unaided!') I love you, incomparable creature—love you to distraction; and as your beauty has inflicted such desperate wounds upon my heart, so I am sure your gentleness will not fail to cure them. Devotion like mine must meet its reward. Your answer, divinest creature! and let it be favourable to my hopes, I conjure you!"

"I have no other answer to give," replied Aveline, coldly, and with an offended look, "except such as any maiden thus unwarrantably and unseasonably importuned would make. Your addresses are utterly distasteful to me, and I pray you to desist them. If you have any real wish to oblige me, you will at once free me from your presence."

"Your hand, Sir Giles—your hand!" cried the old usurer, raising himself to his feet with difficulty. "So you are not to be moved by my sufferings—by my prayers, cruel and proud beauty?" he continued, regarding her with a mortified and spiteful look. "You are inflexible—eh?"

"Utterly so," she replied.

"Anthony Rocke!" cried Dame Sherborne, "show the gentlemen to the door—and bolt it upon them," she added in a lower tone.

"Not so fast, madam—not so fast!" exclaimed Sir Francis. "We will not trouble old Anthony just yet. Though his fair young mistress is indisposed to listen to the pleadings of love, it follows not she will be equally insensible to the controlling power of her father's delegated authority. Her hand must be mine, either freely, or by compulsion. Let her know on what grounds I claim it, Sir Giles."

"Your claim cannot be resisted, Sir Francis," rejoined the other; "and if you had followed my counsel, you would not have condescended to play the abject wooer, but have adopted the manlier course and demanded her hand as your right."

"Nay, Sir Giles, you cannot wonder at me, knowing how infatuated I am by this rare and admirable creature. I was unwilling to assert my rights till all other means of obtaining her hand had failed. But now I have no alternative."

"Whence is your authority derived?" inquired Aveline, trembling as she put the question.

"From your dead father," said Sir Giles, sternly. "His last

solemn injunctions to you were, that you should wed the man to whom he had promised you; provided your hand were claimed by him within a year after his death. With equal solemnity you bound yourself to fulfil his wishes. The person to whom you were thus sacredly contracted is Sir Francis Mitchell; and now, in your father's name, and by your father's authority, he demands fulfilment of the solemn pledge."

"O, this is wholly impossible!—I will not believe it!" almost shrieked Aveline, throwing himself into Dame Sherborne's arms.

"It is some wicked device to ensnare you, I am convinced," said the old lady, clasping her to her breast. "But we defy them, as we do the Prince of Darkness, and all his iniquities. Avoid thee, thou wicked old sinner!—thou worse than the benighted heathen! Get hence! I say, Sathanas!" she ejaculated to Sir Francis.

"Ay, I am well assured it is all a fabrication," said Anthony Rocke. "My master had too much consideration and tenderness for his daughter to promise her to a wretched old huncks like this, with one foot in the grave already. Besides, I knew he held both him and Sir Giles Mompesson in utter abomination and contempt. The thing is therefore not only improbable, but altogether impossible."

"Hold thy peace, sirrah!" cried Sir Francis, foaming with rage, "or I will cut thy scurril tongue out of thy throat. Huncks, indeed! As I am a true gentleman, if thou wert of my own degree, thou shouldst answer for the opprobrious expression."

"What proof have you that my father entered into any such engagement with you?" inquired Aveline, turning to Sir Francis. "Your bare assertion will scarcely satisfy me."

"Neither will it satisfy me," remarked Anthony. "Let him produce his proofs."

"You are acquainted with your father's handwriting, I presume, fair maiden!" rejoined Sir Francis. "And it may be that your insolent and incredulous serving-man is also acquainted with it. Look at this document, and declare whether it be not, as I assert, traced in Hugh Calveley's characters. Look at it, I say, thou unbelieving hound," he added to Anthony, "and contradict me if thou canst."

"It is my master's handwriting, I am compelled to admit," replied the old serving-man, with a groan.

"Are you prepared to render obedience to your father's behests, maiden?" demanded Sir Giles, menacingly.

"O, give me counsel! What shall I say to them?" cried Aveline, appealing to Dame Sherborne. "Would that Sir Jocelyn were here!"

"It is in vain to expect his coming," rejoined Sir Giles, with a bitter laugh. "We have taken good care to keep him out of the way."

"There is no help, then!" said Aveline, despairingly. "I must submit."

"We triumph," whispered Sir Giles to his partner.

"Talk not of submission, my dear young lady," implored Anthony Rocke. "Resist them to the last. I will shed my best blood in your defence. If my master did give them that paper, he must have been out of his senses, and you need not therefore regard it as other than the act of a madman."

"Peace, shallow-pated fool!" cried Sir Giles. "And do you, fair mistress, attend to me, and you shall learn under what circumstances that contract was made, and how it becomes binding upon you. Deeply indebted to Sir Francis, your father had only one means of discharging his obligations. He did not hesitate to avail himself of it. He promised you to his creditor, and obtained his own release. Will you dishonour his memory by a refusal?"

"O, if this tale be true, I have no escape from misery!" exclaimed Aveline. "And it wears the semblance of probability."

"I take upon me to declare it to be false," cried Anthony Rocke.

"Another such insolent speech shall cost thee thy life, sirrah!" cried Sir Giles, fiercely.

"Read over the paper again, my dear young lady," said Dame Sherborne. "You may perhaps find something in it not yet discovered, which may help you to a better understanding of your father's wishes."

"Ay, read it!—read it!" cried the old usurer, giving her the paper. "You will perceive in what energetic terms your father enjoins compliance on your part with his commands, and what awful denunciations he attaches to your disobedience. Read it, I say, and fancy he is speaking to you from the grave in these terms—'Take this man for thy husband, O my daughter, and take my blessing with him. Reject him, and my curse shall alight upon thy head.'"

But Aveline was too much engrossed to heed him. Suddenly her eye caught something she had not previously noticed, and she exclaimed—"I have detected the stratagem. I knew this authority could never be committed to you."

"What mean you, fair mistress?" cried Sir Francis, surprised and alarmed. "My name may not appear upon the face of the document; but, nevertheless, I am the person referred to by it."

"The document itself disproves your assertion," cried Aveline, with exultation.

"How so?" demanded Sir Giles, uneasily.

"Why, see you not that he to whom my father designed to give my hand was named Osmond Mounchensey?"

"Osmond Mounchensey!" exclaimed Sir Giles, starting.

"This is pure invention!" cried Sir Francis. "There is no such name on the paper—no name at all, in short—nor could there be any, for reasons I will presently explain."

"Let your own eyes convince you to the contrary," she rejoined, extending the paper to him, and revealing to his astounded gaze and to that of his partner, who looked petrified with surprise, the name plainly written as she had described it.

"How came it there?" cried Sir Giles, as soon as he could command himself.

"I cannot say," replied Sir Francis. "I only know it was not there when I—that is, when I received it. It must be Clement Lanyere's handiwork," he added, in a whisper.

"I see not how that can be," replied the other, in a like low tone. "The alteration must have been made since it has been in your possession. It could not have escaped my observation."

"Nor mine," cried Sir Francis. "'Tis passing strange!"

"Your infamous project is defeated," cried Aveline. "Let the rightful claimant appear, and it will be time enough to consider what I will do. But I can hold no further discourse with you, and command your instant departure."

"And think you we mean to return empty-handed, fair mistress?" said Sir Giles, resuming all his wonted audacity. "Be not deceived. By fair means or foul you shall be the bride of Sir Francis Mitchell. I have sworn it, and I will keep my oath!"

"As I am a true gentleman, it will infinitely distress me to resort to extremities, fair mistress," said the old usurer, "and I still trust you will listen to reason. If I have put in practice a little harmless stratagem, what matters it? All is fair in love. And if you knew all, you would be aware that I have already paid so dearly for you, that I cannot afford to lose you. Cost what it will, you must be mine."

"Never!" exclaimed Aveline, resolutely.

"You will soon alter your tone, when you find how little power of refusal is left you, fair mistress," said Sir Giles. "A litter is waiting for you without. Will it please you to enter it?"

"Not unless by force—and you dare to offer me violence!" she replied.

"I advise you not to put our forbearance to the test," said Sir Giles.

"I should be grieved to impose any restraint upon you," subjoined Sir Francis; "and I trust you will not compel me to act against my inclinations. Let me lead you to the litter."

As he advanced towards her, Aveline drew quickly back, and Dame Sherborne uttered a loud scream; but her cries brought no other help than could be afforded by old Anthony Rocke,

who, planting himself before his young mistress, menaced Sir Francis to retire.

But this state of things was only of brief duration. It speedily appeared that the two extortioners had abundant assistance at hand to carry out their infamous design. A whistle was sounded by Sir Giles; and at the call the cottage door was burst open by some half-dozen of the myrmidons, headed by Captain Bludder.

Any resistance that the old serving-man could offer was speedily overcome. Knocked down by a pike, he was gagged and pinioned, and carried out of the house. The cries of Aveline and the elderly dame were stifled by scarves tied over their heads; and both being in a fainting condition from fright, they were borne to the litter which was standing at the door, and being shut up within it, were conveyed as quickly as might be to Sir Giles Mompesson's mansion near the Fleet. Thither, also, was old Anthony Rocke taken, closely guarded on the way by two of the myrmidons.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE "STONE COFFIN."

A DREADFUL dungeon! the last and profoundest of the range of subterranean cells already described as built below the level of the river Fleet: a relict, in fact, of the ancient prison which had escaped the fury of Wat Tyler and his followers, when the rest of the structure was destroyed by them. Not inaptly was the dungeon styled the "Stone Coffin." Those immured within it seldom lived long.

A chill like that of death smote Sir Jocelyn, as he halted before the door of this horrible place. Preceded by Grimbald, the jailer, with a lamp in one hand and a bunch of large keys in the other, and closely followed by the deputy-warden and Sir Giles Mompesson, our young knight had traversed an underground corridor with cells on one side of it, and then, descending a flight of stone steps, had reached a still lower pit, in which the dismal receptacle was situated. Here he remained up to the ankles in mud and water, while Grimbald unlocked the ponderous door, and with a grin revealed the interior of the cavernous recess.

Nothing more dank and noisome could be imagined than the dungeon. Dripping stone-walls, a truckle-bed with a mouldy straw mattress, rotting litter scattered about, a floor glistening and slippery with ooze, and a deep pool of water, like that

outside, at the further end,—these constituted the materials of the frightful picture presented to the gaze. No wonder Sir Jocelyn should recoil, and refuse to enter the cell.

"You don't seem to like your lodgings, worshipful sir," said Grimbald, still grinning, as he held up the lamp; but you will soon get used to the place, and you will not lack company—rats, I mean: they come from the Fleet in swarms. Look! a score of them are making off yonder—swimming to their holes. But they will come back again with some of their comrades, when you are left alone and without a light. Unlike other vermin, the rats of the Fleet are extraordinarily sociable—ho! ho!"

And, chuckling at his own jest, Grimbald turned to Sir Giles Mompesson, who, with Joachim Tunstall, was standing at the summit of the steps, as if unwilling to venture into the damp region below, and observed—"The worshipful gentleman does not like the appearance of his quarters, it seems, Sir Giles; but we cannot give him better,—and, though the cell might be somewhat more comfortable if it were drier, and perhaps more wholesome, yet it is uncommonly quiet, and double the size of any other in the Fleet. I never could understand why it should be called the 'Stone Coffin'—but so it is. Some prisoners have imagined they would get their death with cold from a single night passed within it—but that's a mistaken notion altogether."

"You have proof to the contrary in Sir Ferdinando Mounchensey, father of the present prisoner," said Sir Giles, in a derisive tone. "He occupied that cell for more than six months—did he not, good Grimbald? You had charge of him, and ought to know?"

"One hundred and sixty days exactly, counting from the date of his arrival to the hour of his death, was Sir Ferdinando an inmate of the 'Stone Coffin,'" said the jailer, slowly and sententiously; "and he appeared to enjoy his health quite as well as could be expected—at all events, he did so at first. I do not think it was quite so damp in his days—but there couldn't be much difference. In any case, the worthy knight made no complaints; perhaps because he thought there would be no use in making 'em. Ah! worshipful sir," he added to Sir Jocelyn, in a tone of affected sympathy, which only made his mockery more offensive, "your father was a goodly man, of quite as noble a presence as yourself, though rather stouter and broader in the shoulders, when he first came here; but he was sadly broken down at the last—quite a skeleton. You would hardly have known him."

"He lost the use of his limbs, if I remember right, Grimbald?" remarked Sir Giles, willing to prolong the scene, which appeared to afford him infinite amusement.

"Entirely lost the use of 'em," replied the jailer. "But what of that? He didn't require to take exercise. A friend was

permitted to visit him, and that was more grace than the Council usually allows to such offenders."

"It was far more than an offender like Sir Ferdinando deserved," said Sir Giles: "and, if I had known it, he should have had no such indulgence. Star-Chamber delinquents cannot expect to be treated like ordinary prisoners. If they do, they will be undeceived when brought here—eh, Master Tunstall?"

"Most true, Sir Giles, most true!" replied the deputy-warden. "Star-Chamber prisoners will get little indulgence from me, I warrant them."

"Unless they bribe you well—eh, Master Joachim?" whispered Sir Giles, merrily.

"Rest easy on that score, Sir Giles. I am incorruptible, unless you allow it," rejoined the other, obsequiously.

"My poor father!" ejaculated Sir Jocelyn. "And thou wert condemned without a crime to a death of lingering agony within this horrible cell! The bare idea of it is madness. But Heaven, though its judgments be slow, will yet avenge thee upon thy murderers!"

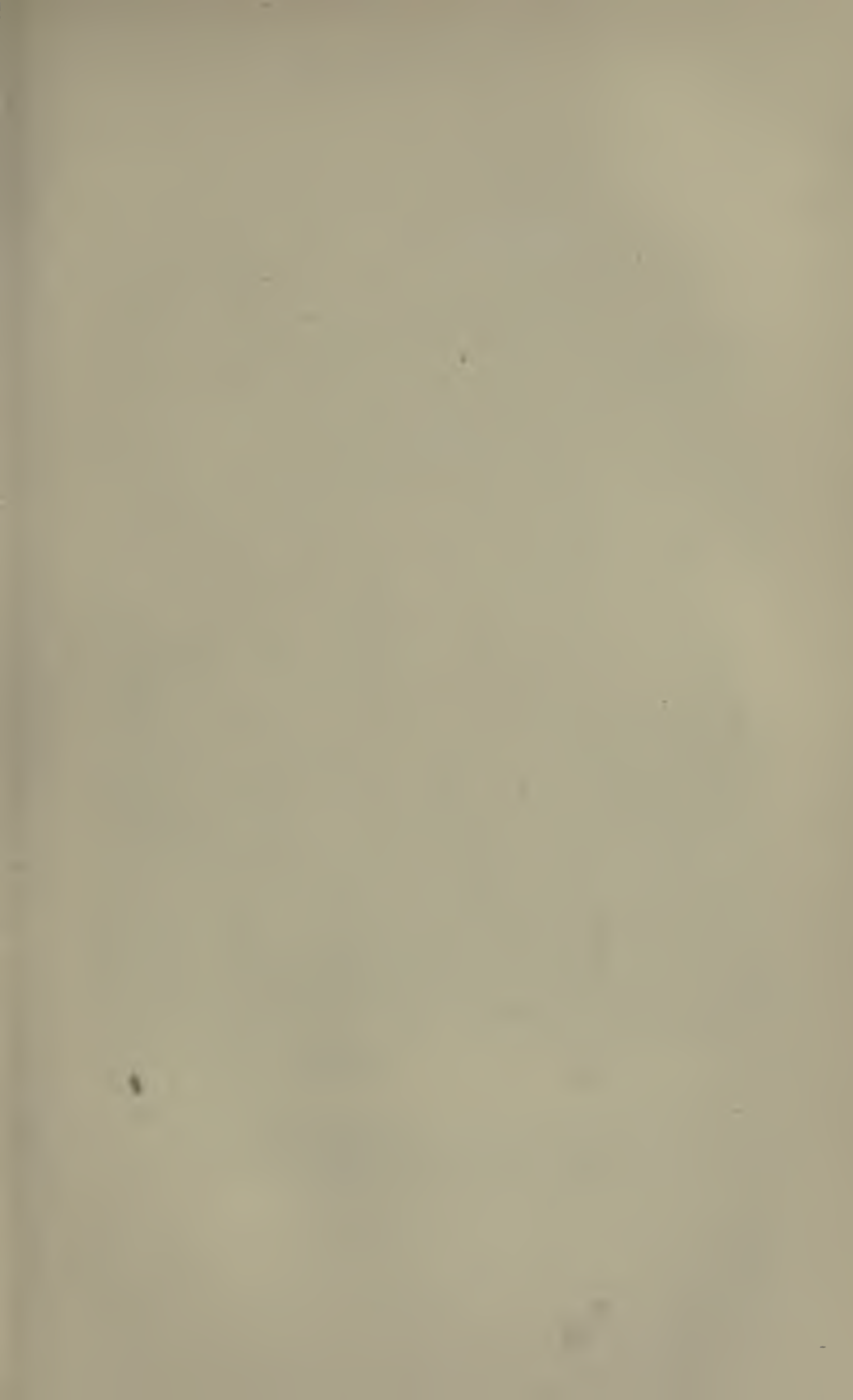
"Take heed what you say, prisoner," observed Grimbald, changing his manner, and speaking with great harshness. "Every word you utter against the decrees of the Star-Chamber will be reported to the Council, and will be brought up against you; so you had best be cautious. Your father was *not* murdered. He was immured in this cell in pursuance of a sentence of the High Court, and he died before his term of captivity had expired, that is all."

"O, the days and nights of anguish and despair he must have endured during that long captivity!" exclaimed Sir Jocelyn, before whose gaze a vision of his dying father seemed to pass, filling him with unutterable horror.

"Days and nights which will henceforth be your own," roared Sir Giles; "and you will then comprehend the nature of your father's feelings. But he escaped what you will *not* escape—exposure on the pillory, branding on the cheek, loss of ears, slitting of the nose, and, it may be, scourging. The goodly appearance you have inherited from your sire will not be long left when the tormentor takes you in hand. Ha! ha!"

"One censured by the Star-Chamber must wear a paper on his breast at the pillory. You must not forget that mark of infamy, Sir Giles," said the deputy-warden, chuckling.

"No, no; I forget it not," laughed the extortioner. "How ingeniously devised are our Star-Chamber punishments, Master Joachim, and how well they meet the offences. Infamous libellers and slanderers of the State, like Sir Jocelyn, are ever punished in one way; but new crimes require new manner of punishment. You recollect the case of Traske, who practised Judaism, and forbade the use of swine's flesh, and who was



THE ABDUCTION.

sentenced to be fed upon nothing but pork during his confinement."

"I recollect it perfectly," cried Tunstall; "a just judgment. The wretch abhorred the food, and would have starved himself rather than take it; but we forced the greasy morsels down his throat. Ha! ha! You are merry, Sir Giles, very merry; I have not seen you so gleesome this many a day—scarcely since the time when Clement Lanyere underwent his sentence."

"Ah! the accursed traitor!" exclaimed Sir Giles, with an explosion of rage. "Would he had to go through it again! If I catch him, he shall—and I am sure to lay hands upon him soon. But to our present prisoner. You will treat him in all respects as his father was treated, Master Joachim—but no one must come nigh him."

"No one shall approach him save with an order from the Council, Sir Giles," replied the other.

"Not even then," said the extortioner, decisively. "My orders alone must be attended to!"

"Hum!" ejaculated the deputy-warden, somewhat perplexed. "Well, I will follow out your instructions as strictly as I can, Sir Giles. I suppose you have nothing more to say to the prisoner, and Grimbald may as well lock him up."

And, receiving a nod of assent from the other, he called to the jailer to finish his task.

But Sir Jocelyn resolutely refused to enter the cell, and demanded a room in one of the upper wards.

"You shall have no other chamber than this," said Sir Giles, in a peremptory tone.

"I did not address myself to you, sir, but to the deputy-warden," rejoined Sir Jocelyn. "Master Joachim Tunstall, you well know I am not sentenced by the Star-Chamber, or any other court, to confinement within this cell. I will not enter it: and I order you, at your peril, to provide me with a better chamber. This is wholly unfit for occupation."

"Do not argue the point, Grimbald, but force him into the cell," roared the extortioner.

"Fair and softly, Sir Giles, fair and softly," replied the jailer. "Now, prisoner, you hear what is said—are you prepared to obey?"

And he was about to lay hands rudely upon Sir Jocelyn, when the latter, pushing him aside, ran nimbly up the steps, and seizing Sir Giles by the throat, dragged him downward.

Notwithstanding the resistance of the extortioner, whose efforts at liberation were seconded by Grimbald, our young knight succeeded in forcing his enemy into the dungeon, and hurled him to the further end of it. During the struggle, Sir Jocelyn had managed to possess himself of the other's sword, and he now pointed it at his breast.

"You have constituted yourself my jailer," he cried; "and by the soul of him who perished in this loathsome cell by your instrumentality, I will send you instantly to account for your crimes on High, unless you promise to assign me a different chamber!"

"I promise it," replied Sir Giles. "You shall have the best in the Fleet. Let me go forth, and you shall choose one for yourself."

"I will not trust you, false villain," cried Sir Joceyln. "Give orders to the deputy-warden, and if he pledges his word they shall be obeyed, I will take it. Otherwise you die."

"Bid Master Tunstall come to me, Grimbald," gasped the extortioner.

"I am here, Sir Giles, I am here," replied the deputy-warden, cautiously entering the cell. "What would you have me do?"

"Free me from this restraint," cried Sir Giles, struggling to regain his feet.

Sir Jocelyn shortened his sword in order to give him a mortal thrust, but his purpose was prevented by Grimbald. With his heavy bunch of keys the jailer struck the young knight upon the head, and stretched him insensible upon the ground.

CHAPTER LV.

A SECRET FRIEND.

When Sir Jocelyn again became conscious, he found he had been transported to a different cell, which, in comparison with the "Stone Coffin," was clean and comfortable. The walls were of stone, and the pallet on which he was laid was of straw; but the place was dry, and free from the noisome effluvium pervading the lower dungeon. The consideration shown him originated in the conviction on the part of the deputy-warden, that the young man must die if left in his wounded state in that unwholesome vault, and so the removal took place in spite of the objections raised to it by Sir Giles Mompesson, who would have willingly let him perish. But Master Tunstall dreaded an inquiry, as the prisoner had not yet been sentenced by the Council.

After glancing round his cell, and endeavouring to recal the events that had conducted him to it, Sir Jocelyn tried to raise himself, but found his limbs so stiff that he could not accomplish his object, and he sank back with a groan. At this moment the door opened, and Grimbald, accompanied by a repulsive-looking personage, with a face like a grinning mask, advanced towards the pallet.

"This is the wounded man, Master Luke Hatton," said the

jailer; "you will exert your best skill to cure him; and you must use despatch, in case he should be summoned before the Council."

"The Council must come to him if they desire to interrogate him now," replied Luke Hatton; adding, after he had examined the injuries received by the young knight, "he is badly hurt, but not so severely as I expected. I will undertake to set him upon his legs in three days. I did as much for Sir Giles Mompesson, and he was wounded in the same manner."

"Why, this is the young knight who struck down Sir Giles at the jousts," said Grimbald. "Strange! you should have two mortal enemies to deal with."

"Is this Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey?" inquired Luke Hatton, with apparent curiosity. "You did not tell me so before."

"Perhaps I ought not to have told you so now," returned the other. "But do you take any interest in him?"

"Not much," replied the apothecary; "but I have heard his name often mentioned of late. You need not be uneasy about this young man being summoned before the Star-Chamber. The great case of the Countess of Exeter against Lady Lake comes on before the King and the Lords of the Council to-morrow or next day, and it will occupy all their attention. They will have no time for aught else."

"What think you will be the judgment in that case?" inquired Grimbald.

"I have my own opinion," returned the apothecary, with a significant smile; "but I care not to reveal it. I am a witness in the case myself, and something may depend on my evidence. You asked me just now whether I took any interest in this young man. I will tell you what surprised me to find him here. Sir Francis Mitchell has taken it into his head to rob him of his intended bride."

"Ah! indeed!" exclaimed the jailer, with a laugh. "The old dotard does not mean to marry her?"

"By my troth but he does—and the wedding is to be a grand one. I will tell you more about it anon."

At this moment Sir Jocelyn, who had hitherto remained with his eyes closed, uttered a cry of anguish, and again vainly endeavoured to raise himself.

"Aveline married to Sir Francis?" he cried. "Said you she was to be forced into a union with that hoary miscreant? It must be prevented."

"I see not how it can be, Sir Jocelyn," replied Luke Hatton, "since she is in the power of Sir Giles Mompesson. Besides which, the 'hoary miscreant,' as you style him, will take means to ensure her acquiescence."

"Means! what means?" demanded Sir Jocelyn, writhing in agony.

"A love potion," replied Luke Hatton, calmly; "I am about to prepare a philter for her, and will answer for its effect. She will be the old knight's, and without opposition."

"Infernal villain! and that I should be lying here, unable to give her aid!"

And overcome by the intensity of his emotion, as well as by acute bodily suffering, Sir Jocelyn relapsed into insensibility.

He was not, however, suffered to remain long in this state. Stimulants, applied by Luke Hatton, soon restored him to consciousness. The first object his gaze fell upon was the apothecary, and he was about to vent his fury upon him in words, when the latter, cautiously raising his finger to his lips, said in a whisper,—"I am a friend. Grimbald is only at the door, and a single exclamation on your part will betray me." He then leaned down, and bringing his lips almost close to the young knight's ear, whispered—"What I said before the jailer was correct. I have been applied to by Sir Francis for a philter to be administered to Mistress Aveline, and I have promised it to him; but I am secretly in the service of Clement Lanyere, and will defeat the old usurer's villanous designs."

Sir Jocelyn could not repress a cry of delight, and Grimbald entered the cell.

CHAPTER LVI.

SHOWING HOW JUDGMENT WAS GIVEN BY KING JAMES IN THE STAR-CHAMBER, IN THE GREAT CAUSE OF THE COUNTESS OF EXETER AGAINST SIR THOMAS AND LADY LAKE.

Five days had King James and the whole of the Privy Council been sitting within the Star-Chamber; and the great cause that had occupied them during the whole of that time was drawing to an end—little remaining for his Majesty to do in it, except to pronounce sentence.

The cause to which James and his councillors had lent a hearing so long and patient, was no other than that of the Countess of Exeter against Sir Thomas Lake and his Lady. Throughout it, whether prompted or not as to the course he pursued, the Monarch displayed great sagacity and penetration. Prior to the trial, and when the preliminary statements had alone been laid before him, he determined personally to investigate the matter, and without acquainting any one with his design, while out hunting, he rode over to the Earl of Exeter's residence at Wimbledon—the place, it will be recollected, where the forged confession was alleged to have been signed by the Countess—and proceeded to examine the particular chamber indicated by Lady

Lake and Sarah Swarton as the scene of the transaction. He was accompanied by Buckingham, and some other lords high in his favour. On examination it was found that the chamber was of such size, and the lower part of it, where Sarah was reported to have been concealed, was so distant from the large bay window, that any conversation held there must have been inaudible to her; as was proved, upon experiment, by the King and his attendants. But the crowning circumstance was the discovery made by James himself—for his courtiers were too discreet to claim any share in it—that the hangings did not reach within two feet of the floor, and consequently could not have screened a secret witness from view; while it was further ascertained that the arras had been entirely undisturbed for several years. On making this discovery, James rubbed his hands with great glee, and exclaimed—"Aha! my Lady Lake and her handmaiden may forswear themselves if they choose—but they will not convince me. Oaths cannot confound my sight."

This asseveration he repeated during the trial, at which he proffered his own testimony in favour of the plaintiff; and indeed it was evident from the first, however much he might seek to disguise it, that he was strongly biassed towards the Countess. Not content, however, with the discovery he had made at Wimbledon, James had secretly despatched a serjeant-at-arms to Rome, where Lord Roos had taken up his residence after leaving England, and obtained from him and from his confidential servant, Diego, a statement incriminating Lady Lake, and denouncing the confession as a wicked forgery. Luke Hatton, moreover, who had gone over, as already intimated, to the side of the Countess, and who took care to hide his own complicity in the dark affair, and to give a very different colour to his conduct from what really belonged to it—Luke Hatton, we say, became a most important witness against the Lakes, and it was said to be owing to his crafty insinuations that the King conceived the idea of visiting Wimbledon as before mentioned.

Notwithstanding all this, there were many irreconcilable contradictions, and the notoriously bad character of Lord Roos, his cruel treatment of his wife, and his passionate devotion to the Countess, led many to suspect that, after all, he and Lady Exeter were the guilty parties they were represented. Moreover, by such as had any knowledge of the man, Luke Hatton was not esteemed a credible witness; and it was generally thought that his testimony ought not to be received by the King, or accepted only with the greatest caution.

But the opinions favourable to Lady Lake and her husband underwent an entire change in the early part of the trial, when, to the surprise of all, and to the inexpressible dismay of her parents, Lady Roos, who had been included in the process by the Countess, made a confession, wherein she admitted that the

document produced by her mother against Lady Exeter was fabricated, and that all the circumstances said to be connected with it at the time of its supposed signature, were groundless and imaginary. The unfortunate lady's motive for making this revelation was the desire of screening her husband; and so infatuated was she by her love of him, that she allowed herself to be persuaded—by the artful suggestions, it was whispered, of Luke Hatton—that this would be the means of accomplishing their reconciliation, and that she would be rewarded for her devotion by his returning regard. If such was her belief, she was doomed to disappointment. She never beheld him again. Lord Roos died abroad soon after the trial took place; nor did his ill-fated lady long survive him.

Thus, it will be seen, all circumstances were adverse to the Lakes. But in spite of the difficulties surrounding her, and the weight of evidence, true or false, brought against her, no concession could be obtained from Lady Lake, and she stoutly protested her innocence, and retaliated in most forcible terms upon her accusers. She gave a flat contradiction to her daughter, and poured terrible maledictions on her head, ceasing them not until silenced by command of the King. The fearful charges brought by her ladyship against Luke Hatton produced some effect, and were listened to; but, as they could only be substantiated by herself and Sarah Swarton, they fell to the ground; since here again Lady Roos refused to be a witness against her husband.

Unwilling to admit his wife's criminality, though urged by the King to do so in order to save himself, Sir Thomas Lake was unable to make a successful defence; and he seemed so much bowed down by affliction and perplexity, that sympathy was generally felt for him. Indeed, his dignified deportment and reserve gave him some claim to consideration.

In this way was the trial brought to a close, after five days' duration.

Now, let a glance be cast round the room wherein the lords of the council were deliberating upon their judgment.

It was the Star Chamber.

Situated on the south-eastern side of Westminster Hall, near the river, this famous room,—wherein the secret councils of the kingdom were then held, and had been held during many previous reigns,—was more remarkable for the beauty of its ceiling than for size or splendour. That ceiling was of oak, richly carved and gilt, and disposed in squares, in the midst of which were roses, portcullises, pomegranates, and fleurs-de-lys. Over the door leading to the chamber was placed a star, in allusion to its name, with the date 1602. Its walls were covered with ancient tapestry, and it had many windows looking towards the river, and filled with painted glass.

Though it would appear to be obvious enough, much doubt

has been entertained as to the derivation of the name of this celebrated Court. "Some think it so called," writes the author of a learned treatise on its jurisdiction, before cited, "of *Crimen Stellionatus*, because it handleth such things and cases as are strange and unusual: some of *Stallen*. I confess I am in that point a Platonist in opinion, that *nomina naturâ fiunt potiùs quam vagâ impositione*. And so I doubt not but *Camera Stellata* (for so I find it called in our ancient Year-books) is most aptly named; not because the Star-Chamber, where the Court is kept, is so adorned with Stars gilded, as some would have it—for surely the chamber is so adorned because it is the seal of that Court, *et denominatio*, being *à præstantiori magis dignum trahit ad se minus;* and it was so fitly called because the stars have no light but what is cast upon them from the sun by reflection, being his representative body, and, as his Majesty was pleased to say when he sat there in his royal person, representation must needs cease when the person is present. So in the presence of his great majesty, the which is the sun of honour and glory, the shining of those stars is put out, they not having any power to pronounce any sentence in this Court—for the judgment is the King's only; but by way of advice they deliver their opinions, which his wisdom alloweth or disalloweth, increaseth or moderateth at his royal pleasure." This explanation, which seems rather given for the purpose of paying a fulsome compliment to James, in whose reign the treatise in question was written, is scarcely satisfactory; and we have little doubt that the name originated in the circumstance of the roof of the chamber being embellished with gilded stars. We are told in Strype's Stowe, that the Star-chamber was "so called, either by derivation from the old English word *Steoran*, which signifieth to steer or rule, as doth the pilot of a ship; because the King and Council did sit here, as it were, at the *stern*, and did govern in the ship of the Commonwealth. Some derive it from *Stellio*, which signifies that starry and subtle beast so called. From which cometh the word *stellionatus*, that signifieth *cosenage;* because that crime was chiefly punishable in this Court by an extraordinary power, as it was in the civil law. Or, because the roof of this Court was garnished with gilded stars, as the room itself was starry, or full of windows and lights. In which respect some of the Latin Records name it *Camera Stellata;* the French *Chambre des Etoiles;* and the English the Starred Chamber." The derivation of the name, we repeat, seems to us sufficiently simple and obvious; but as it has been matter of controversy, we have thought it worth while to advert to the circumstance.

To proceed. In a chair of state, elevated above the table round which the Lords of the Council were gathered, and having a canopy over it, sat the King, calmly watching them as they pursued their deliberations, his own mind being completely made

up as to the sentence he should pronounce,—and ever and anon stealing a glance at Lady Lake and her husband, who were seated behind a bar that crossed the room below the Council-table. The defendants, or prisoners—for such in effect they were—were under the guard of a pursuivant and a serjeant-at-arms. A little behind them was Sarah Swarton; but, though faint and frightened, and scarcely able to sustain herself, she was not allowed a seat. On a raised bench at the side sat the beautiful Countess of Exeter, radiant with smiles and triumph. She was receiving the congratulations of several dames of high rank by whom she was accompanied. Amongst the Judges of the Court were the Lord Chancellor, who sat immediately under the King, with his mace and seal before him; the Lord Treasurer and the Keeper of the Privy Seal; the President of the Council; the Judges; the Archbishop of Canterbury, and eight bishops and other prelates; and all the dukes, marquises, earls, and barons composing the Privy Council, to the number of forty. Besides these, there were present Prince Charles, three of the lieger ambassadors, and many other distinguished persons. Though all had gone against her, Lady Lake's spirit was still undiminished, and she eyed the Council imperiously; but her husband's regards were fixed upon the ground, and his head rested upon his breast.

After some further time had been needlessly consumed by the Council in stating their opinions to the King, he prepared to deliver judgment. On this the defendants arose, and profound silence reigned throughout the Court as James addressed them.

The sentence was to this effect:—A fine of upwards of £22,000 was imposed upon Sir Thomas, with a further censure of imprisonment in the Tower during the King's pleasure. Lady Lake was to be imprisoned with him. A public recognition of their offence, for reparation of the Countess's injured honour, was to be made by them, in the most ample manner his Majesty could devise. Sarah Swarton was adjudged to the Fleet. "Thence," ran the sentence, "to be whipped at the cart's tail to Westminster, and afterwards from the same place to Cheapside. At Cheapside to be branded with F. A. (signifying *false accusation*), one letter on either cheek. To do public penance in Saint Martin's Church. To be detained in the Fleet till they do weary of her; and then to be sent to Bridewell, there to spend and end her days."

When the poor handmaiden heard this severe sentence, she uttered a cry of despair, and fell down on the floor in a swoon.

Thereupon the delinquents were removed, and as Lady Lake withdrew, a look passed between her and the Countess, which, in spite of the assurance of the latter, made her turn pale and tremble.

In a very remarkable letter, subsequently addressed by Lady

Lake to her successful opponent in this great case, she said;—"I wish my submission could make you an innocent woman, and wash you as white as a swan; but it must be your own submission unto God, and many prayers, and tears, and afflictions, which, seeing you have not outwardly, examine your heart, and think on times past, and remember what I have written to you heretofore. The same I do now again, for I yet nothing doubt, but that, although the Lord Roos was sent away, and is dead, yet truth lives." The truth, however, was never fully brought to light; and that justice which the vindictive lady expected was denied her.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE TWO WARRANTS.

At the conclusion of the trial, James was observed to smile, and Buckingham, who had drawn near the chair of state, ventured to inquire what it was that entertained his Majesty.

"Our fancy has been tickled by a curious conceit," answered the King. "We discern a singular similitude between the case we hae just heard, and the transgression of our first parents."

"How so, your Majesty?" asked the favourite.

"As thus," replied James. "Sir Thomas Lake may be likened to our gude Father Adam, wha fell into sin frae listening to the beguilements of Eve—Mither Eve being represented by his dochter, my lady Roos—and ye will own that there cannot be a closer resemblance to the wily auld serpent than we find in my Lady Lake."

"Excellent!" cried Buckingham, joining in the royal laughter; "but before your Majesty quits that seat, I must entreat you to perform that which I know you delight in—an act of justice."

"Anither act of justice, ye should say, my Lord," returned James, in a tone of slight rebuke; "seeing we hae just delivered a maist memorable judgment in a case which has cost us five days of incessant labour and anxious consideration. But what is it ye require at our hands? In whose behalf are we to exercise our prerogative?"

"In that of Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey, my gracious Liege," replied Buckingham, "who has been committed to the Fleet for contempt of this high and honourable Court, and can only be released by your Majesty's warrant. As I was myself present on the occasion when the intemperate expressions laid to his charge were used, I can affirm that he was goaded on by his enemies to utter them; and that in his calmer moments he must have regretted his rashness."

"Ye shall have the warrant, my Lord," said James, with a smile. "And it does ye meikle credit to have made the request. The punishment Sir Jocelyn has already endured is amply sufficient for the offence, and we hae nae fears of its being repeated. A single visit to the Fleet is eneuch for any man. But in respect to Sir Jocelyn, I am happy to say that his Excellency the Conde de Gondomar has quite set him right in our gude opinion, and has satisfactorily proved to us that the spy we suspected him to be was anither person, wha shall be nameless. Ha! here comes the Count himself," he exclaimed, as the Spanish Ambassador approached. "Your Excellency will be glad to hear, after the handsome manner you have spoken of him, that it is our intention to restore Sir Jocelyn to the favour he previously enjoyed. My Lord of Buckingham is to have a warrant for his release from the Fleet, and we shall trust to see him soon at Court as heretofore."

"While your Majesty is in this gracious mood," said De Gondomar, bending lowly, "suffer me to prefer a request respecting a person of very inferior consequence to Sir Jocelyn—but one in whom I nevertheless take an interest—and who is likewise a prisoner in the Fleet."

"And ye require a warrant for his liberation—eh, Count?"

"Your Majesty has said it," replied De Gondomar, again bending lowly.

"What is the nature of his offence?" demanded the King.

"A trifling outrage upon myself," returned the Ambassador; "a mere nothing, your Majesty."

"Ah! I know whom you mean. You refer to that rascally apprentice, Dick Taverner," cried James. "Call ye his attack upon you a trifling outrage—a mere nothing, Count? I call it a riot—almost a rebellion—to assault an ambassador."

"Whatever it may be, I am content to overlook it," said De Gondomar; "and in sooth, the knaves had received some provocation."

"Aweel, since your Excellency is disposed to view it in that light," rejoined James—"since ye display such generosity towards your enemies, far be it from us to oppose your wishes. The order for the 'prentice's release shall be made out at the same time as Sir Jocelyn's. My Lord of Buckingham will give orders to that effect to the Clerk of the Court, and we will attach our sign manual to the warrants. And now—have ye not done?" he continued, observing that Buckingham still lingered. "Have ye any mair requests to prefer?"

"I had some request to make on the part of the Prince, my Liege," replied the Marquis; "but his Highness, I perceive, is about to speak to you himself."

As he said this, Prince Charles, who had occupied a seat among the Council, drew near, and, stepping upon the elevation on

which the chair of state was placed, so as to bring himself on a level with his royal father, made a long and apparently important communication to him in a very low tone. James listened to what was said by his son with great attention, and seemed much surprised and indignant at the circumstances, whatever they were, related to him. Ever and anon, he could not repress a great oath, and, but for the entreaties of Charles, would have given vent to an explosion of choler, which must have betrayed the secret reposed to his keeping. Calming himself, however, as well as he could, he at length said, in a low tone—"We confide the matter to you, since you desire it, for we are assured our dear son will act worthily and well as our representative. Ye shall be clothed with our authority, and have power to punish these heinous offenders as ye see fit. We will confirm your judgments, whatever they be, and sae will our Preevy Council."

"I must have power to pardon, as well as to punish, my gracious Liege," said Charles.

"Ye shall hae baith," answered the King; "but the distinction is needless, since the ane is comprehended in the ither. Ye shall have our ain seal, and act as if ye were King yersel'—as ye will be ane of these days. Will that content ye?"

"Perfectly," replied Charles, gratefully kissing his royal father's hand. And, descending from the platform, he proceeded to join Buckingham and De Gondomar, with whom he held a brief whispered conference.

Meanwhile, the two warrants were made out, and received the royal signature; after which James quitted the Court, and the Council broke up.

The warrants having been delivered by the clerk to Buckingham, were entrusted by the latter to Luke Hatton, who, it appeared, was waiting for them in the outer gallery; and, after the latter had received some directions respecting them from the Marquis, he hastened away.

As he passed through New Palace-yard, Luke Hatton encountered a tall man muffled in a long black cloak. A few words were exchanged between them, and the information gained by the individual in the cloak seemed perfectly satisfactory to him. So he went his way, while Luke Hatton repaired to the Fleet Prison.

There he was at once admitted to the ward wherein Sir Jocelyn was confined, and announced to him the glad tidings of his restoration to freedom. By this time Sir Jocelyn was perfectly recovered from the injuries he had received from the jailer during his struggle with Sir Giles Mompesson, so that there was no obstacle to his removal, and his natural wish was to quit the prison at once; but such cogent reasons were assigned by Luke Hatton for his remaining there for another day, that he could not but acquiesce in them. Indeed, when all the circumstances

were explained to him, as they were, by the apothecary, he could not but approve of the plan, which, it appeared, was about to be acted upon the next day for the punishment of his enemies; and it then became evident why Sir Giles should not be made acquainted with his release, which must be the case if the warrant were immediately acted upon. Neither the deputy-warden, nor the jailer—both of whom, as he knew, were the extortioner's creatures—were to be informed of it till the last moment. Certain disclosures, respecting Clement Lanyere, which were made by Luke Hatton to the young knight, affected him very deeply, and plunged him for a long time in painful thought.

Quitting the cell of the more important prisoner, Luke Hatton proceeded to that of the apprentice, whom he acquainted with his good fortune, holding out to him certain prospects of future happiness, which drove poor Dick nearly distracted. At the suggestion of his new friend, the 'prentice wrote a letter to Gillian Greenford, conjuring her, by the love she bore him, and by their joint hopes of a speedy union, implicitly to comply with the directions of the bearer of the note—whatever they might be: and, armed with this, Luke Hatton quitted the Fleet, and, procuring a horse, rode off, at a rapid pace, to Tottenham.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE SILVER COFFER.

Within Sir Giles Mompesson's vast and gloomy mansion, it has been said there were certain rooms which, from their size and splendour, formed a striking contrast to the rest of the habitation. Never used,—except on extraordinary occasions, when their owner gave a grand entertainment with some ulterior object,—these apartments, notwithstanding their magnificence, partook in some degree of the chilling and inhospitable character of the house. Even when brilliantly lighted up, they wanted warmth and comfort; and though the banquets given within them were sumptuous and profuse, and the wine flowed without stint, the guests went away dissatisfied, and railing against their ostentatious host. Thus, though the stone walls were hung with rich tapestry, the dust had gathered thickly upon its folds, while portions of the rugged masonry were revealed to view. The furniture was massive, but cumbrous and ill-assorted; and the gilded ceiling and Venetian mirrors, from want of care, had become tarnished and dim.

Such as they were, however, these apartments were assigned to Aveline, when she was forcibly brought to the extortioner's habitation, as before narrated. Allowed to range within them at

pleasure, she was kept strictly within their limits. The doors were constantly guarded by one or other of the myrmidons; and any communication with the external world was impossible, because the windows were partially grated, and looked into a court-yard. Beyond this, she was subjected to no restraint; and her own attendants, Dame Sherborne and old Anthony Rocke, were suffered to remain with her.

Had it not been for her exposure to the annoyance of frequent visits from Sir Francis Mitchell, and her anxiety about Sir Jocelyn, Aveline would not have found her confinement so intolerable. But the enamoured old usurer persecuted her at all hours, and she could never be free from the intrusion, since the doors could not be shut against him. Sometimes, he came accompanied by his partner, though more frequently alone, but ever with the same purpose,—namely, that of protesting the violence of his passion, and seeking to soften her obduracy. As may be well supposed, his pleadings, however urged, were wholly ineffectual, and excited no other feelings, except those of detestation, in her bosom. Such a state of things could not endure for ever; and her only hope was, that finding all his efforts to move her fruitless, he would in time desist from them. Not that she was without other fearful apprehensions, which were shared by her attendants.

Nearly a fortnight had thus passed by, when, one day, during which she had seen nothing of her tormentor, and was rejoicing at the circumstance, the repast usually served at noon was brought in by a fresh serving-man. Something in this person's manner, and in the meaning glance he fixed upon her, attracted her attention; otherwise, he was a man of singularly unprepossessing appearance. She addressed a few words to him, but he made no reply, and became suddenly as reserved as his predecessor had been. This deportment, however, it presently appeared, was only assumed. While placing a flask of wine on the table, the man said in a low tone,—"I am a friend of Sir Jocelyn. Constrain yourself, or you will betray me. Sir Francis is watching us from an eyelet hole in the door. Drink of this," he added, pouring wine into a goblet.

"Is it medicated?" she asked in a whisper, regarding him anxiously.

"It is supposed to be so," he answered, with a scarcely perceptible smile. "Drink, I say. If you do not, you will mar my project. 'Tis well!" he added, as she raised the goblet to her lips. "A few words must explain my design. Sir Francis will fancy you have swallowed a love-potion. Take care not to undeceive him, for on that belief rests your safety. When he presents himself, as he will do shortly, do not repulse him as heretofore. Smile on him as kindly as you can; and though the task of duping him may be difficult and distasteful to you, shrink

not from it. The necessity of the case justifies the deception. If he presses his suit, no longer refuse him your hand."

"I cannot do it," murmured Aveline, with a shudder.

"You must," rejoined Luke Hatton—for it was he—"or incur worse dangers. Provoked by your resistance, Sir Francis has lost all patience, and is determined to accomplish his purpose. Knowing my skill as a brewer of philters, he has applied to me, and I have promised him aid. But have no fear. Though employed by him, I am devoted to you, and will effect your deliverance—ay, and avenge you upon your persecutors at the same time—if you follow my instructions exactly. Raise the goblet to your lips again. Quaff its contents without apprehension—they are perfectly harmless. Force smiles to your features—give tenderness to your tones, and softness to your glances—and all will be won."

And with a grin, which, though intended to encourage her, somewhat alarmed Aveline, he took up the flask of wine and departed.

As her singular adviser had predicted, it was not long before the old usurer made his appearance, evidently full of eagerness to ascertain whether any change had been wrought in her disposition towards him by the wonder-working draught. Dissembling her aversion as well as she could, and assuming looks very foreign to her feelings, she easily succeeded in persuading him that the philter had taken effect, and that all obstacles to his happiness were removed. Transported with rapture, he fell upon his knees, and besought her to crown his felicity by consenting to their union on the following day. Bewildered by the various emotions, yet still managing to play her part, she returned an answer, which he construed into an affirmative; and now quite beside himself with delight, the amorous old dotard left her.

The alteration in Aveline's manner and deportment towards her persecutor did not escape the notice of her attendants, and greatly perplexed them. Dame Sherborne ventured to remonstrate with her, hoping she could not be in earnest; and old Anthony Rocke bluntly told her he would rather see her in her grave than the bride of such a hoary reprobate as Sir Francis. Aware that her actions were watched, Aveline thought it best to dissemble, even with her attendants; and they were both convinced she was either bewitched or had lost her senses; and in either case bitterly deplored her fate.

Nor must it be supposed that Aveline herself was without much secret misgiving, however skilfully and courageously she might act her part. The appearance of Luke Hatton, as we have more than once remarked, was calculated to inspire distrust in all brought in contact with him; and with no other proofs of his sincerity except such as were furnished by the circumstances, she might well entertain suspicion of him. While professing

devotion, he might intend to betray her. In that event, if driven to extremity, she resolved to liberate herself by the only means that would then be left her.

In the evening, Luke Hatton paid her a second visit; and on this occasion comported himself with as much caution as at first. He applauded her conduct towards Sir Francis, whom he stated to be most effectually duped, and counselled her to persevere in the same course; adding, with his customary sardonic grin, that grand preparations were making for the wedding-feast, but he thought the cook's labours likely to be thrown away.

Next day, Aveline found all her counsellor had told her was correct. Several of the rooms, hitherto thrown open to her—in especial the great banquetting-chamber—were now closed; and it was evident from the sounds that reached her ear—footsteps hurrying to and fro, loud impatient voices, and noises occasioned by the removal of furniture, and the placing of chairs and tables, together with the clatter of plates and dishes—that preparations for a festival were going on actively within them. Nothing could equal the consternation and distress exhibited by Dame Sherborne and old Anthony Rocke; but faithful to her scheme, Aveline (however she desired it) did not relieve their anxiety.

At noon, Luke Hatton came again. He seemed in great glee; and informed her that all was going on as well as could be desired. He counselled her to make two requests of Sir Francis. First, that he should endow her with ten thousand marks, to be delivered to her before the nuptials; secondly, that she should be permitted to shroud her features and person in a veil during the marriage ceremony. Without inquiring the meaning of these requests, which, indeed, she partly conjectured, Aveline promised ready compliance; and her adviser left her, but not till he had once more proffered her the supposed philter, and caused her to place the cup containing it to her lips.

Ere long, he was succeeded by Sir Francis, arrayed like a bridegroom, in doublet and hose of white satin, thickly laid with silver lace, and a short French mantle of sky-blue velvet, branched with silver flowers, white roses in his shoes, and drooping white plumes, arranged *à l'Espagnolle,* in his hat. Besides this, he was trimmed, curled, oiled, and would have got himself ground young again, had such a process been practicable.

But though he could not effect this, he did the next thing to it, and employed all the restoratives suggested by Luke Hatton. He bathed in milk, breakfasted on snail-broth, and swallowed a strange potion prepared for him by the apothecary, which the latter affirmed would make a new man of him, and renovate all his youthful ardour. It certainly had produced an extraordinary effect; and when he presented himself before Aveline, his gestures were so extravagant, and his looks so wild and unpleasant, that it was with the utmost difficulty she repressed a

scream. His cheeks were flushed, as if with fever, and his eyes dilated and burning with unnatural lustre. He spoke almost incoherently, tossing his arms about, and performing the antics of a madman. The philter, it was clear, had been given him, and he was now under its influence.

Amid all this strange frenzy, so alarming to Aveline, he dwelt upon nothing but his inextinguishable passion, and never for a moment withdrew his fevered gaze from her. He told her he would be her slave for life, proud to wear her chains; and that she should be absolute mistress of his house and all his possessions. On this she mustered up resolution to prefer the requests she had been counselled to make; and Sir Francis, who was in no mood to refuse her anything, at once acceded to them. He laughed at the notion of the veil—said it was a delicate fancy, and quite charmed him—but as to the ten thousand marks, they were utterly unworthy of her acceptance, and she should have thrice the amount delivered to her in a silver coffer before the ceremony. With these, and a great many other professions, he released her from his presence, which had become well-nigh insupportable.

After a while, a magnificent bridal-dress of white satin, richly trimmed with lace, together with a thick white veil of the largest size, calculated to envelope her whole person, were brought her by a young damsel, who told her she was engaged to serve her as tire-woman; adding that "she hoped she would be able to satisfy her ladyship, as she had already served the Countess of Exeter in that capacity."

"Why do you call me 'ladyship,' child?" said Aveline, without looking at her. "I have no right to any such title."

"But you soon will have," replied the young tire-woman, "as the bride of Sir Francis, you must needs be my Lady Mitchell."

Checking the rejoinder that rose to her lips, Aveline cast her eyes, for the first time, on the speaker; and then, to her great surprise, perceived it to be her village acquaintance, Gillian Greenford. A significant glance from the blue eyes of the pretty damsel impressed her with the necessity of caution, and seemed to intimate that Gillian herself was likewise in the plot. And so it presently appeared she was; for when the damsel had an opportunity of talking quite in private to her new mistress, she informed her of the real motive of her coming there.

"I am engaged, by one who wishes you well, to take your place, sweet Mistress Aveline, and to be married in your stead to Sir Francis Mitchell," she said.

"And have you really consented to such an arrangement?" rejoined Aveline. "Is it possible you can sacrifice yourself thus?"

"I am not to be sacrificed," returned the damsel, quickly. "If it were so, I would never have agreed to the scheme. But I am told I shall get a fortune, and—"

"Oh, then the ten thousand marks are for you!" interrupted the other. "I now see the meaning of that part of the plan. But what else do you hope to accomplish?"

"The deliverance of my unfortunate lover, Dick Taverner, from the Fleet," she answered.

"But how is your marrying this wicked old usurer to effect your object?" inquired Aveline. "You may save me by the proposed stratagem; but you will destroy your own happiness, and all your lover's hopes."

"No, no, I shall not," replied Gillian, hastily; "I can't tell how it's to be managed, but I am quite sure no harm will happen to me, and that Dick's restoration to liberty will be the reward of the service—if such it may be called—that I am about to render you. He wrote to me so himself."

"At least, tell me by whom you are engaged, and I can then judge of the probability of the rest happening in the way you anticipate."

"Do not question me further, sweet mistress," replied the damsel, "for I am bound to secrecy. But thus much I may declare—I am the agent of one, who, for some purposes of his own—be they what they may—is determined to counteract all Sir Francis's vile machinations against you, as well as those of his partner, Sir Giles Mompesson, against your lover, Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey. Ah! you understand me now, I perceive, sweet mistress! You have been guarded by this unseen but watchful friend, during the whole of your confinement in this dreadful habitation; and he has kept an equal watch over your lover in the Fleet."

"What! Is Sir Jocelyn a prisoner in the Fleet?" exclaimed Aveline. "I knew it not!"

"He is; but the period of his deliverance approaches," replied Gillian. "The secret friend I spoke of has bided his time, and the hour is at hand when full measure of revenge will be dealt upon those two wicked oppressors. He has long worked towards it; and I myself am to be an humble instrument towards the great end."

"You astonish me!" cried Aveline, greatly surprised at the change in the damsel's manner, as well as by what she said.

"Do not perplex yourself, fair mistress," pursued Gillian. "All will be speedily made known to you. But now, no more time must be lost, and we must each assume the character we have to enact. As I am to be the bride, and you the tire-woman, you must condescend to aid me in putting on these rich robes, and then disguise yourself in my rustic attire. We are both pretty nearly of a size, so there is little risk of detection in that particular; and if you can but conceal your features for a short while, on Sir Francis's entrance, the trick will never be discovered. All the rest has been arranged; and I am a mere

puppet in the hands of others, to be played as they direct. Bless us! how beautiful this dress is, to-be-sure!—what satin! —and what lace! The Countess of Exeter has just such another. Have you heard that her ladyship has gained her cause against those wicked Lakes, who conspired against her? But what am I saying—when I know you cannot have heard of it! Well, then, it occupied five days in the Star-Chamber; and Sir Thomas and his lady are sent to the Tower, and Sarah Swarton to the Fleet. Poor creature! she is to be whipped and branded, and to do penance in Saint Martin's church. Dreadful! but I wont think of it. I wonder how this dress will become me! How astounded Dick Taverner would be, if he could only see me in it! Mayhap he will—there's no saying. And now, fair mistress, may I crave your aid?"

While Gillian was thus running on, she had partially disrobed herself, and very soon afterwards was decked out in the rich attire, the effect of which upon her own person she was so desirous of ascertaining. When her toilet was complete, she could not help running up to a mirror, and on seeing the reflection of her well-formed figure now displayed to unwonted advantage, she clapped her hands and cried out with girlish delight.

Allowing her to gratify her feelings of vanity by the contemplation of her pretty person for a few minutes, Aveline felt it necessary to recal her to her situation, and her own transformation into the tire-woman was speedily effected,—Gillian's dress fitting her exactly. The light-hearted damsel was quite as much pleased with this change as with the other—and vowed that Aveline looked far better in the rustic gown than she herself did in the silken attire.

But time pressed; and as Sir Francis might surprise them, they hastened to complete their arrangements. Gillian's comely features, as well as her sumptuous robe, had to be obscured by the envious veil; and as it was thrown over her, she could not help heaving a sigh. Aveline then put on the muffler which had been worn by the country damsel, and their disguises were complete.

Not a minute too soon. At this juncture a tap was heard at a door communicating with the adjoining apartment, and the voice of the old usurer was heard inquiring whether his bride was ready. An answer in the affirmative was given by Aveline, and, with a throbbing heart and faltering steps, Gillian prepared to obey the summons.

The door was thrown open, and mustering up all her resolution, she passed through it. Both Sir Francis and his partner were waiting to receive her. The latter was richly attired, but had not changed the sombre hue of his habiliments, even for the anticipated ceremonial, being clad, as usual, in black. In this

respect he offered a marked contrast to the gay apparel of the antiquated bridegroom, as well as by the calmness of his deportment and the stern gravity of his looks. Behind them stood Luke Hatton, bearing a heavy silver coffer, of antique workmanship.

"What means this veil?" cried Sir Giles, gazing suspiciously at Gillian, as she emerged from the inner room, followed cautiously by Aveline, who was wrapped in the muffler. "Why are the bride's features thus hidden?"

"A mere whim, Sir Giles—a pleasant fancy," replied the old usurer. "But she must have her way. I mean to indulge her in everything."

"You are wrong," rejoined the extortioner. "Make her feel you will be her master. Bid her take it off."

"On no account whatever, Sir Giles. I have only won her by submission, and shall I spoil all at the last moment by opposing her inclinations? Of a truth not."

"Who is the maiden with her?" demanded Sir Giles, scrutinising Aveline with a keen glance. "Why does she wear a muffler? Is that a whim, likewise?"

"Perchance it is," replied Sir Francis; "but I have given no consent to it. She is only the tire-woman."

"Come, mistress, unmuffle. Let us see your face," cried Sir Giles, striding towards the terrified maiden, who thought discovery was now inevitable.

But Luke Hatton interposed to save her.

"Prevent this rudeness," he whispered, plucking Sir Francis's cloak. "Prevent it instantly. If her whim be thwarted, I will not answer for the consequences."

"Desist, Sir Giles—desist, I pray you!" cried the old usurer, in alarm. "It is my bride's wish that her attendant be not interfered with—and mine too."

"Well, be it as you will," replied the extortioner, testily. "But I would not permit the impertinence were I in your case. The bride must raise her veil when she stands before the priest."

"She shall do as she pleases," replied Sir Francis, gallantly. "If she desires to hide her blushes, I will not put any compulsion upon her to disclose them. Come, fair mistress," he added, taking the trembling hand of the veiled maiden, "the priest awaits us in the further chamber, where the ceremony is to take place, and where several of the noble and illustrious guests who have consented to grace our nuptials are already assembled. Some of the most illustrious personages in the land will be present—the Marquis of Buckingham, and perhaps Prince Charles himself. His Excellency the Spanish Ambassador has promised to come. Let us on, then. Yet, ere we proceed further, I have to request your acceptance of that silver coffer. The thirty thousand marks within it constitute your dowry."

As he spoke, Luke Hatton advanced, and holding the coffer towards the veiled damsel, so that she could touch it, said—"Place your hand upon this silver box, and take possession of it, fair mistress. I am a witness that Sir Francis Mitchell has freely bestowed it, with its contents, upon you. It will remain in my custody till you require me to deliver it up to you."

CHAPTER LIX.

HOW THE MARRIAGE WAS INTERRUPTED.

After the presentation of the silver casket, as before described, the whole of the bridal party, with the exception of Aveline, who contrived to remain behind, passed on into the adjoining chamber, where the priest was understood to be in waiting to perform the marriage ceremony.

Apprehensive of the consequences of the discovery which must inevitably be soon made, Aveline would have flown back to her own room, but was deterred, from the strange noises and confusion she heard within it. Uncertain how to act, she at last resolved upon attempting an escape from the house, and was hurrying forward, in the hope of gaining the corridor unperceived, but the sound of voices outside again drove her back; and, in this new dilemma, she had nothing left but to take refuge behind the tapestry covering the walls, which being fortunately loose and hanging upon the ground, effectually concealed her.

Scarcely was she screened from observation in this manner, when the door was thrown open, and a crowd of young gallants—evidently, from their bearing and the richness of their attire, of high rank—entered the apartment. Without exposing herself, Aveline was enabled, through the folds of the tapestry, to command a view of what was going forward. The youthful nobles—for such they were—who had just come in, were laughing loudly; and their jests were chiefly at the expense of the old usurer, whose marriage they had been invited to attend.

After looking round for a moment, as if in search of some one to direct them whither to go, the foremost of them clapped his hands, whereupon the thick curtains which, in lieu of a door, guarded the entrance to the other room, were drawn aside, and disclosed a group of persons collected together within that chamber. In the midst of them were the bride and bridegroom—the former still enveloped in her veil—together with the priest and his assistant. At this sight, the band of youthful nobles set up a shout of laughter, and rushed tumultuously

forward, while the curtains, dropping to their place, closed upon the scene.

Presently the outer door again opened, and this time to admit three persons, all of whom were magnificently dressed, and apparently of yet higher rank than those who had preceded them. As they were masked, their features could not be discerned; but they were all distinguished by rare personal grace. One of them, indeed, was remarkable for symmetry of figure, and his finely-proportioned limbs were arrayed in habiliments of the most splendid material, adorned with pearls and precious stones, and richly embroidered. Yet he did not seem to hold the chief place among them: that, by common consent, seemed accorded to a young man clad in black velvet, who, by the majesty of his deportment and the gravity of his manner, appeared to exercise a certain sway over his companions, and to be treated by them, when he spoke, with marked respect. The third individual was habited in a Spanish cloak, of murrey-velvet, lined with cloth-of-silver, branched with murrey-flowers, and wore a chain of gold, richly set with precious stones, round his neck, from which depended the order of the Golden Fleece.

There was something in the presence of these three important personages that gave Aveline a feeling of security, such as she had not experienced since her forcible detention by the two extortioners, and she almost felt inclined to throw herself at the feet of the one who appeared to be the principal of them, and solicit his protection. But before she could execute her half-formed design, the party had approached the entrance of the nuptial chamber; and the curtain being raised for their admittance, excluded them, the next moment, from her view.

All now appearing quiet, she again ventured from her hiding-place, and speeded towards the door communicating with the gallery. But her departure was unexpectedly interrupted by the sudden entrance of another masked personage, tall in stature, and habited entirely in black; and in him she could not fail to recognise the messenger employed by Sir Giles Mompesson to bring her, in the first instance, to his habitation. Circumstances had subsequently occurred to induce her to change her opinion respecting this mysterious individual. Nevertheless, his appearance at this juncture would have caused her to utter a cry of terror, if she had not been reassured by the timely appearance of one upon whom she had reliance, and who raised his finger to his lips in token of silence. This was Luke Hatton, who, at the very moment that Lanyere appeared, issued from the chamber where the marriage ceremony was being performed.

"Be not alarmed, fair maiden," said Lanyere, in a low voice, "you are in no danger; and all your troubles, I trust, are well-nigh ended. I thought you were in the marriage-chamber. Give me your hand. You must assist at the mock ceremonial

taking place within there. I have no time for explanations; and indeed they are needless, since all will be speedily made clear to you. Divest yourself, I pray you, of this muffler. It is part of my plan that your features should now be revealed. You will understand why, anon."

With this, he led her quickly towards the entrance of the inner chamber; and, pushing aside the curtain, advanced a few steps beyond it, still holding her by the hand, and followed by Luke Hatton.

The apartment, which was of considerable size and splendidly furnished, was full of wedding-guests, grouped around that portion of it which was railed off for the accommodation of those more immediately connected with the ceremonial, amongst whom, as a matter of course, was Sir Giles Mompesson.

Somewhat apart from the others were the three important persons who had arrived last; and the most exalted among them was seated on a raised chair, contemplating the scene, while his companions stood near him. They had now taken off their masks; and, even in that agitating moment, Aveline recognised in the trio the Marquis of Buckingham, the Conde de Gondomar, and Prince Charles. All the rest of the company remained standing; and some of the young nobles formed a small semicircle behind the royal chair.

Lanyere's entrance with his fair companion could not have been better timed. They arrived at the particular juncture when Sir Francis, having presented the wedding-ring to the priest was in the act of receiving it back from him, in order that it might be placed upon the finger of the bride; and the noise made by the promoter, who still wore his vizard, drew all eyes upon him, and upon the damsel by whom he was accompanied.

A smile of intelligence passed between Prince Charles and Buckingham; and some remark was made by the latter, to which the Prince replied by a gesture, seeming to intimate that the interruption was not altogether unexpected by him. De Gondomar's looks also betrayed that he was likewise in the secret.

Others of the company laughed as if in anticipation of a jest; but the majority looked surprised—but none so much so as Sir Giles Mompesson. As his eye fell upon the dark and ominous figure of Lanyere, and shifted from him to Aveline, he appeared transported with rage; and dashing the ring from the hand of the astonished bridegroom (who, having his back toward the new-comers, was unaware of what was going forward), exclaimed —"Proceed no further! We have been deceived! Look there!"

"Where?—where?" cried Sir Francis. "What is the matter, Sir Giles? You quite terrify me with your fierce looks. Help me to pick up the ring, and let the ceremony go on."

"It is well for you that it is *not* completed," replied Sir Giles, almost black in the face with choler. "You know not whom you are about to wed. But we will soon see. Off with your veil, minion! Off with it, I say!"

"Sir Giles, I will not permit this liberty," cried the old usurer. "You shall not touch her. Whom should it be but my own dear, delectable Aveline?"

"Look round, I say, and credit your own eyes, since you doubt my assertions!" roared Sir Giles.

"Ten thousand furies!" ejaculated Sir Francis, as he complied with the injunction. "Why, there she is, in good truth, when I thought she was by my side. Whom, then, have I been about to take to my bosom?"

"It matters not," replied Sir Giles. "She you desired to wed is yonder, and must take the other's place. That is—but I forget," he added, suddenly checking himself, and lowering his tone, "nought can be done, except according to rule, in this presence. Your vanity must needs be gratified by bringing together all this courtly company to witness your marriage. And now they will only mock you."

"'Sdeath! you are right, Sir Giles," rejoined the old usurer. "I am become a mere laughing-stock to my guests. But at least I will see my false bride's features. "You hear what I say, madam," he added to Gillian—"let me behold your face without more ado."

As he uttered the command, the damsel threw off her veil, and stood blushing, half-smiling and half-abashed, before the assemblage. Her natural charms, heightened by her attire, and by the peculiar situation in which she was placed, elicited general admiration.

"As I live, 'tis the pretty tire-woman from Tottenham, engaged by Luke Hatton to attend on Aveline," cried Sir Francis; "but, 'fore Heaven, I have gained by the exchange. I like her better than the other, and will go through with the ceremony. Proceed, Sir Priest."

At this declaration, there was a shout of laughter from the assemblage; but the merriment was increased, when De Gondomar, stepping up to the bride, said, "I forbid the marriage. She belongs to me."

"But my claim is paramount to that of your Exellency," cried the old usurer.

"I cannot admit it," rejoined the other. "Let the damsel decide for herself."

"Then I will accept neither," said Gillian. "Dick Taverner is already master of my heart, and no one but he shall have my hand. I have been brought here to play a part, on the clear understanding that nothing serious was to come of it."

"And nothing serious shall come of it, fair maiden," said Prince Charles. "I promise that on my princely faith."

"Then, indeed, I am easy," replied Gillian, inclining herself reverentially towards the royal speaker.

At this juncture, Sir Giles Mompesson, who had been hitherto restrained by the presence of the royal guest from any violent measures, was advancing with menacing looks towards Lanyere, when the attention of Charles being directed to his movements by Buckingham, the Prince instantly arose, and in a tone of authority not to be disputed, said—

"Not a step further, Sir Giles. I will take care that all needful explanations be given."

"But your Highness cannot be aware that this is a heinous offender and traitor," rejoined Sir Giles, pointing to Lanyere. "I was about to take means to prevent his escape."

"He has no intention of escaping," rejoined Charles; "and I forbid any one to leave this apartment without my permission."

"Will your Highness suffer me to relieve this fair creature from the embarrassing position in which she is placed," said De Gondomar. "The youth she has mentioned, and to whom she declares her affections are given, was confined in the Fleet Prison for an attack on me; but, on my representation of the matter to the King, your father, his Majesty's gracious consent was immediately accorded for his liberation."

"I am aware of it, Count," replied Prince Charles.

"But your Highness may not be aware that the poor fellow is without," pursued the Ambassador. "Will it please you to allow him to be brought in?"

The Prince assented, on which De Gondomar signed to Luke Hatton, who seemed waiting for the order, and, disappearing for a moment, returned with the apprentice.

Though evidently prepared for the scene that awaited him, and not overburdened with modesty, Dick Taverner could not help exhibiting considerable confusion; but the sight of his mistress somewhat restored him, and he pressed towards her. Sir Francis, however, stepped between them, exclaiming—"Get hence, base varlet, she is my wife!"

"No such thing!" cried Gillian—"the ceremony has only been half performed. I am *not* married. I am yours—and yours only, dear, sweet Dickon."

"You never shall be his—you are mine—" exclaimed the old usurer—"I implore his Highness the Prince to let the marriage go forward."

"Nay, I shall not allow any compulsion to be placed on the damsel's inclinations," replied Charles, unable to repress a smile. "She must choose for herself."

"In that case, your Highness, my choice is soon made," replied Gillian, taking her lover's hand.

"And honest Dickon need not be under any alarm at such part of the marriage as has already taken place," observed De Gondomar. "It has been a mock ceremonial throughout. This

is no priest, but one of my Lord of Buckingham's grooms employed for the occasion."

"Then I have been a dupe all this time!" cried Sir Francis, furiously. "O, purblind dolt that I am!"

But he met with no commiseration from the assemblage, who only laughed at his rage and absurd grimaces.

"Kneel, and thank his Highness for his goodness," said De Gondomar to the young couple; "and then, if he will give you leave to do so, depart at once. Stay not a moment longer than you can help it in this house, or in the neighbourhood."

"Most assuredly I will not, your Excellency," returned Dick. "It is much too near the Fleet to be agreeable to me. I have to offer my heartfelt thanks to your Excellency for your kindly consideration of me, and I own that I have scarcely deserved it at your hands."

"Render your thanks, as I have said, to his Highness, who is alone entitled to them, good fellow," said the Ambassador. "Take Gillian home to her grandsire—and wed her as soon as you can. She will need no dowry," he added in a low tone—"for she is already provided with thirty thousand marks."

"Honestly come by, I hope, your Excellency?" inquired Dick.

"Ay, ay—thou suspicious blockhead. Do as I have bidden thee, and get hence. More remains to be done, to which thou art a hindrance."

On this, the young couple prostrated themselves before Prince Charles, who graciously gave his hand to Gillian to kiss, and then motioning them to rise, they were allowed to quit the room.

Luke Hatton saw them safe out of the house, and very well it was he accompanied them, for they had many obstacles to encounter. Before quitting them, the apothecary delivered up the silver casket to Dick, bidding him take good care of it, as it contained his intended wife's dowry.

Meanwhile, Sir Giles Mompesson, who had with difficulty controlled his impatience during the incidents previously described, advanced towards Prince Charles, and with a profound reverence, said—"Will it please your Highness to terminate this idle scene, which, though apparently amusing to the company assembled, is by no means so entertaining to Sir Francis and myself?"

"You shall have your wish, sir," rejoined Charles, in a stern tone and with a freezing look, that seemed of ill augury to the extortioner—"It is my intention to terminate the scene. Stand forth, Clement Lanyere, and let me hear what you have to declare in reference to this man."

Hereupon, the promoter, consigning Aveline to the care of a gentleman who advanced towards her for the purpose, and respectfully took her hand, stepped forward, and, removing his mask, confronted his enemy.

CHAPTER LX.

ACCUSATIONS.

By this time a very different complexion had been imparted to the scene. The interruption of the marriage ceremony, and the perplexities of the old usurer, tricked out of his intended bride, and bereft even of her substitute, had afforded abundant amusement to the company, who, so far from feeling pity for the sufferer, seemed vastly to enjoy his mortification and disappointment. But all laughter died away, and every tongue became suddenly mute, as Prince Charles, assuming the severe look and dignified deportment of a judge, commanded Clement Lanyere to stand forward, and prefer the charges he had to make against Sir Giles Mompesson.

All eyes were fixed upon the extortioner and his accuser; and though etiquette prevented the company from advancing too near the royal seat, a dense semicircle was formed in front of it, in the midst of which stood the two principal actors in the drama about to take place, together with the discomfited Sir Francis Mitchell.

Sir Giles Mompesson was not without great misgivings. He saw that his case was already prejudged by the Prince ; and the glance of inquiry with which he had consulted his patron, the Marquis of Buckingham, and which was answered by a cold, menacing regard, convinced him that little support was to be expected in that quarter. Nevertheless, though he felt himself in considerable jeopardy, he allowed no look or gesture indicative of uneasiness to escape him; and the courage that had borne him through many a trial still remained unshaken. Not so Sir Francis Mitchell. He also perceived the perilous position in which he and his partner were placed, and his abject manner showed how thoroughly he was daunted. Look wherever he would, he found no sympathy : every one derided his distress.

But far more than the two extortioners did their accuser command attention. As he cast off his mask and displayed his appalling features, a thrill of surprise and horror pervaded such of the assemblage as had never seen them before. But the feeling was speedily lost in wonder. Drawing himself up to his full height, so that his lofty figure towered above those with whom he was confronted, he seemed to dart lightning glances against them. Even Sir Giles could not bear his scathing looks, and would have shielded himself from them if he could. Though fearful to behold, Lanyere's countenance had a terrible purpose impressed upon it which none could mistake. The effect produced by his appearance upon the spectators was shared even

by Prince Charles, and a few minutes elapsed before the silence was broken. At length, the Prince again spoke :—

"I sit here," he said, "as the representative of the Majesty of England—clothed with the authority of my royal father, and prepared to exercise it as he would do were he present in person. But though this seat is erected into a tribunal before which accusations against wrong-doers can be brought, and sentence upon them pronounced; still, whatever charges are now made, and against whomsoever they may be preferred, those charges will have to be repeated to the Lords of the Council of the Star-Chamber, before whom the accused will be taken; and any judgment now given will have to be confirmed by that high and honourable Court. Of late, the course of justice has been too often baffled and turned aside by the craft and subtlety of certain powerful and audacious offenders. Hence it has been the wish of the King's Highness, in order that the laws may no longer be broken with impunity, that certain preliminary inquiries and investigations should be made on the spot itself, where it is alleged that the crimes and misdemeanours have been committed; and, according to the evidence afforded, such measures as may be deemed fitting taken against the wrong-doers. All present have witnessed this mock ceremonial, and have laughed at its conclusion; but mirth will be changed to indignation, when it is known that the intended marriage was the result of a vile conspiracy on the part of Sir Giles Mompesson and Sir Francis Mitchell, against a young, virtuous, and unprotected maiden, whose beauty had inflamed the breast of the elder, and it might have been expected from that circumstance, the wiser of the two. Into the details of their infamous scheme, it will not be necessary now to enter; and it may suffice to say, that the devoted attachment of the damsel to another was wholly disregarded, while the basest means were employed to induce her consent to a match so abhorrent to her feelings as must have been that with Sir Francis. Failing in this, however, the two conspirators went yet further. They forcibly carried off the maiden from her own dwelling, and detained her against her will within this house, till by their arts they imagined they had gained their point—and that a love-potion would accomplish all for them that their persuasions and fair promises were unable to effect. But the damsel was guarded from all ill by an unseen friend—and the weapons of the conspirators were turned against themselves. You have witnessed how they have been duped; and, as no mischief has resulted from this infamous endeavour, the mortification they have endured may be taken as part punishment of the offence. Stand forward, fair Mistress Aveline Calveley, and substantiate what I have just declared."

Thus adjured, the maiden approached within a few paces of the Prince, and having made a lowly salutation, said,—

"All that your Highness has advanced concerning me is correct."

"Enough, fair mistress," rejoined Charles. "How say you, sirs?" he continued, in a stern tone, to the two extortioners. "Do you confess your guilt, and sue for pardon? If so, down on your knees before this injured damsel, and implore her forgiveness!"

A prey to violent terror, the old usurer instantly adopted the supplicatory posture recommended by the Prince; but Sir Giles refused compliance.

"Having committed no offence, I sue for no pardon," he said, with his wonted audacity. "I repel the charge with indignation; and, in my turn, accuse Clement Lanyere and Luke Hatton of a conspiracy against me. This damsel is but their tool, as I will show, if your Highness will deign to give ear to me."

"It were mere waste of time to listen to idle fabrications,' replied Charles. "The evidence against you is complete, and my opinion upon it is formed. But what saith the maiden herself? Is she willing that any grace be shown her persecutors?"

"The redress I have already obtained at the hands of your Highness is amply sufficient," replied Aveline. "Great as has been the misery these two persons have occasioned me, and grievously as they have sought to injure me, I seek no further satisfaction, but would implore your Highness to pardon them. Their own thoughts will be punishment enough."

"Amply sufficient—for nothing can be more bitter," cried the old usurer, while a scornful smile curled Sir Giles's lips.

"Spoken as I expected you would speak, fair maiden," said Charles; "and were there nothing else against them, I might listen to your kindly intercessions. But other and darker disclosures have to be made; and when you have heard all, even your compassionate breast may be steeled against them. Retire for a moment; but do not leave the room. Your presence may yet be needed."

And bowing graciously to Aveline, she withdrew under the care of the gentleman who had brought her forward, but still remained a spectatress of the scene.

"And now to proceed with the investigation," pursued Charles. "What have you to allege against the two persons before you?" he added, to Clement Lanyere.

"Were I to relate all their enormities, most gracious Prince," replied the promoter, "the recital would be too painful for your hearing, and that of this noble assemblage. But I will, in a word, declare that there is no kind of outrage, oppression, and extortion of which they have not been guilty. Their insatiable greediness has been fed by constant plunder; and, alike cruel and rapacious, nothing but the ruin and absolute destruction of

their victims would content them. Merciless as creditors, they have ground their unfortunate debtors to the dust. The tears of the widow they have robbed of her husband and her means of existence—the despair of the orphan, whose fair prospects they have blighted—have failed to move them. Utterly unscrupulous as to the means of obtaining possession of property, they have forged wills, deeds, and other documents. Their ingenuity has been taxed to devise new means of unjust gain; and, imposing upon the King's Majesty by false representations, they have succeeded in obtaining his letters patent for certain monopolies, which they have so shamefully abused as to bring his sovereign authority into discredit."

"Hold!" cried Sir Giles Mompesson. "To the first vague and general accusations brought against me and my co-patentee, by this branded traitor, who, having been publicly punished for falsehood and libel, cannot be received as a witness, I have deigned no answer, conceiving such accusations cannot be for a moment entertained by you, most gracious Prince. But to this specific charge, I give a flat denial; and demand proof of it. I appeal to the most noble Marquis of Buckingham, through whose interest Sir Francis Mitchell and myself obtained those patents for the licences of inspection of inns and hostelries, as well as for the manufacture of gold and silver lace, whether he has ever heard aught to our disparagement in our conduct of them?"

"Do not appeal to me, sir," replied Buckingham, coldly.

"Sir Giles has demanded proof of my charge, and I am prepared to produce it," said Lanyere. "As to the vagueness of my accusations, your Highness will judge of that when the full catalogue of the offences of these two extortioners, with the damnatory proofs of them, shall be laid before you. This memorial, signed by nearly the whole of the sufferers from their exactions, perpetrated by means of the monopolies, will satisfy your Highness of the truth of my statement—but I have also a witness to call."

"A witness!—here!" muttered Sir Giles, uneasily. "This must be a deeply-concerted scheme."

"Before you bring forward any one," said Charles, addressing Lanyere, "Sir Giles must be set right on one point in which he is in error. Your credibility is not to be disputed, and I accept your testimony against him."

"Your Highness!" cried the extortioner.

"Peace, sir! you shall be heard anon," said Charles. "Produce your witness," he added to Lanyere.

At a sign from the promoter, Luke Hatton, who was standing near the doorway, stepped behind the tapestry, and almost immediately reappearing with Madame Bonaventure, led her towards the Prince, before whom she prostrated herself.

"Arise, Madame," said Charles, graciously. "Your features

are not unfamiliar to me. Methinks you are the hostess of the French ordinary at the tavern of the Three Cranes, in the Vintry."

"Your Highness is in the right—I am Madame Bonaventure, at your Highness's service," replied the hostess, enchanted at this recognition on the part of the Prince. "My Lord of Buckingham, I am well persuaded, will condescend to speak to the merits and respectability of my establishment."

"In sooth will I, good hostess," replied the Marquis. "I can give your Bordeaux my heartiest commendation. 'Tis the best in London."

"Nay, I can speak to it myself—and to the good order of the house too; having visited the tavern incognito," remarked the Prince, smiling.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Madame Bonaventure, rapturously. "Have I been so greatly honoured? *Mon Dieu!*—and not to be aware of it!"

"I must remind you of the cause of your appearance here, Madame Bonaventure," said Lanyere. "You are required to depose before his Highness as to the exactions you suffered from Sir Giles and his partner."

"His Highness shall hear all from me," rejoined the hostess. "I should have been reduced to beggary had I submitted to their extortionate usage. I bore it as long as I could, but when absolute ruin stared me in the face, I had recourse to a noble friend, who helped me in my extremity and delivered me by a stratagem."

"It was a fraudulent scheme," cried Sir Giles;—"a fraud upon his Majesty, as well as upon those who enjoyed the privileges conferred by his letters patent."

"That I can contradict, sir," said Buckingham, "since I myself was present on the occasion, and stated in the hearing of the large company then assembled—several of whom are now before us—that his Majesty relinquished all share of the ruinous fine of three thousand marks imposed by you and your co-patentee upon this good woman."

"And I trust you added, my lord, that the King's Highness would never knowingly consent to have his exchequer enriched by such shameful means," said Charles, with a look of indignation. "These monopolies were not granted by his Majesty for the wrongful profit of their holders; and, since they have been turned to such iniquitous use, I will take upon me to declare that they shall all be suppressed. Do you attempt to deny," he continued, to Sir Giles, "that this outrageous fine was imposed?"

"It were useless to deny it," replied the extortioner, with a malicious look at Buckingham; "but the noble Marquis has not always disapproved so strongly of my proceedings. Nay, I

can show that he himself has been secretly a party to like transactions."

"Ah, villain!" exclaimed Buckingham; "do you venture to calumniate your protector? I shall leave you to the fate you so richly merit. Your foul and false assertions cannot affect me; but they are not likely to improve your case with his Highness, who, though aware of its impotency, will perceive the extent of your malice. If you dared, I doubt not you would likewise assert that his Majesty himself was cognisant of your frauds and oppressions, and approved them."

"I do assert, and will maintain it—ay, and prove it, too—that the King's Highness was aware how these monopolies were managed, and derived a considerable revenue from them," said Sir Giles.

"You hear him, Prince," remarked Buckingham, with a disdainful smile.

"I would not have believed in such matchless effrontery had I not witnessed it," replied Charles. "You may retire, madame," he added to the hostess, who, with a profound reverence withdrew. "Have you aught further to declare, or any other witnesses to produce?" he continued to Lanyere.

"I have both, your Highness," replied the promoter.

"What more false accusations have you to bring against me?" demanded Sir Giles, folding his arms upon his breast, and fixing his keen gaze upon Lanyere.

"His Highness shall hear," replied the promoter. "I have a multitude of cases which I could adduce in support of my charges—all of which will be mentioned in due season—but I shall now content myself with one, and from it the nature of the rest may be inferred. But let me premise that, in the greater part of these cases, and in all the more important of them, where grievous and irreparable wrong has been committed, the engine employed by these crafty and dangerous men has been the Star-Chamber."

"The Star-Chamber!" exclaimed Charles, bending his brows.

"Your Highness will now perceive the drift of this cunning knave's argument," said Sir Giles. "Through me and my partner, all of whose actions will bear the strictest scrutiny, he would covertly attack that high and honourable Court, whose dignity we have ever been most zealous to maintain; and his motive for doing so is because he has incurred its censure. When I have heard his precise charges, I will reply to them—ay, one by one—if he will bring forward the multitude of cases he affirms he can produce against me. But meanwhile I can fearlessly declare my innocence of the wrong imputed to me. If I have been to blame in those monopolies, I am not the only one in fault, as time will show. Nay, there are greater culprits than I"—looking hard at Buckingham, who regarded him dis-

dainfully—"but I deny that I have done more than I can fully justify. As regards other matters, and the way in which my wealth has been acquired, I have acted only with caution, prudence, and foresight. Is it my fault that there are so many persons who, from various causes, will have money, no matter what they pay for it? If they apply to me under such circumstances, and ruin ensues to them, am I to blame? I lend monies as a usurer—all men know it. 'Tis my vocation, and that of my partner; and my answer is his answer. We have done nothing beyond the law; and the law, which has hitherto supported us, will support us still. To affirm that we have employed the highest court of the kingdom as an instrument of oppression and extortion, is an assertion too monstrous to obtain a moment's credit. The Star-Chamber is too jealous of its honour not to resent the imputation; and such a charge will not escape its censure."

"Nevertheless, at whatever risk, I repeat the accusation," rejoined Lanyere; "and my words will not be forgotten by his Highness, and by all others who hear them. I assert that Sir Giles Mompesson has subtly and designedly perverted the practice of that high and honourable Court, causing it to aid his schemes of rapacity and injustice, and using it as a means of stifling the cries of his victims, and working out his purposes of vengeance. Hitherto, he has succeeded in masking his designs with so much skill that they have escaped detection; but when the mischief he has done under the mask of justice, and the wrongs and cruelties he has perpetrated in the name of the law shall be fully made known, no punishment will be deemed commensurate to his crimes. It is chiefly he and his partner who, by their evil doings, have brought the Star-Chamber into disrepute, and made it a terror to all just men, who have dreaded being caught within the toils woven around it by these infamous wretches; and the Court will do well to purge itself of such villanies, and make a terrible example of those who have so dishonoured it."

"The Star-Chamber will never desert its faithful servants, and such we have been," said Sir Giles.

"Say rather the serpents it has nourished in its bosom," rejoined Lanyere. "But to my case. Years ago, a gentleman possessed of noble estates in Norfolk, was unfortunate enough to have some dealings with these two usurers, who thus becoming acquainted with his circumstances, marked him for their prey. He borrowed a large sum of money from them. The loan was not obtained for himself, but for a younger brother"—here the voice of the promoter was choked with emotion, and a few moments elapsed before he could proceed—"I have said that the money was borrowed, not for himself, but for a younger brother, whose recklessness and extravagance had plunged him

deeply in debt. Would that his too generous relative had left him to his fate, and allowed him to rot in a dungeon! But he rescued him from it only to take his place in the end. From this sad epoch may all the unfortunate gentleman's calamities be dated. Certain title-deeds and other instruments had to be deposited with Sir Giles and his partner, as security for repayment of the sum borrowed. They were never returned. On the contrary, under one plea or another, all the deeds relating to the property were obtained from its unsuspecting owner; and then a mortgage deed covering the whole estates was forged by them."

"'Tis false!" exclaimed Sir Giles.

"Have I your Highness's gracious promise of pardon to all except the principals in these great offences?" pursued Lanyere.

"As it may materially serve the ends of justice that such promise should be given, I do not hesitate to comply with your request," replied Charles.

"In that case I shall be able to confound the villains with a witness whom they little expect to be produced against them," replied Lanyere. "Let Lupo Vulp be called," he added.

The summons was responded to as before by Luke Hatton, and the next moment the ill-favoured scrivener emerged from behind the tapestry, and made his way through the assemblage, who recoiled with abhorrence from him, towards the Prince.

"Who art thou?" demanded Charles.

"I am named Lupo Vulp, your Highness, and have for many years been a money-scrivener in the employ of these two gentlemen," replied the individual addressed.

"Thou knowest all their transactions?" said Charles.

"No man better," answered Lupo; "unless it be Clement Lanyere."

"You remember a certain deed of mortgage from Sir Ferdinando Mounchensey to your two employers?" said Lanyere.

"I remember it perfectly," returned the scrivener, "as I should do, seeing I prepared it myself."

During all this time Lupo Vulp had kept his eyes upon the ground, and had never dared to raise them towards Sir Giles, though he felt that the gaze of the latter was fixed upon him.

"Was Sir Ferdinando's signature attached to that deed?" demanded Lanyere.

"Look at me, Lupo, ere thou answerest," cried Sir Giles. "Look at me well—and take heed what thou say'st."

"Be not influenced by him," interposed Charles. "Look only at me, and speak truly, as thou valuest thy safety. If thou hidest aught, or falsifiest aught, the heaviest punishment awaits thee!"

"Hark ye, Lupo," said Sir Giles, in a low tone. "Be warned by me. Utter a word to my detriment, and as surely as thou

art suborned to injure me, I will hang thee. I *can* do so, as thou knowest!"

"Fear him not, Lupo," said Lanyere. "Thou hast his Highness's gracious promise of pardon."

"If my life be but spared, most gracious Prince," said the scrivener, falling on his knees, and clasping his hands together in supplication, "I will reveal all I know touching the malpractices of these two persons."

"Speak, then, without fear," said Charles.

"I repeat my question," said Lanyere, "and demand an explicit answer to it. What was the nature of that deed?"

"It was a forgery," replied the scrivener. "Sir Ferdinando Mounchensey had nothing whatever to do with it. His signature was imitated from other deeds in the possession of my employers, and his seal was likewise fabricated."

"What say you to this, sir?" said Charles to Sir Giles.

"I deny it, as I do all the rest," he replied. "'Tis a foul conspiracy against me, as will appear in the end."

"This is only one amongst many such frauds committed by them, your Highness," said the scrivener. "Since I have your gracious promise of pardon, I will make a clean breast of it, and reveal all I know. Many and many a fair estate has been wrongfully wrested from its owner in this way, by forged deed or will. I will name all the parties to your Highness."

"Hereafter I will listen to thee," rejoined Charles, motioning him to rise; "but I shall now confine myself to the case immediately before me. Proceed, sir," he added to Lanyere.

"I have come to the saddest and darkest part of all," said the promoter. "Your Highness has seen that a deed was forged to obtain possession of the Mounchensey estates—and the fraudulent design was only too successful. It was in vain Sir Ferdinando denied all knowledge of the instrument—in vain he refused payment of the large sum demanded—his estates were seized by the extortioners—and he was deprived of the power of redemption. He commenced a suit against them in the Star-Chamber, but here again he was baffled by the cunning and knavery of Sir Giles, and having unwittingly incurred the censure of the Court, he was cast into the Fleet Prison, where he perished miserably."

"A lamentable history," exclaimed Charles. "It is grievous to think that justice cannot be done him."

"Justice may be done his son," said Buckingham, "who has been oppressed in like manner with his father. Restitution may be made him of the estates of which he has been plundered."

"It is well," said Sir Giles, glancing at Lanyere. "You will not enjoy them."

"What means he?" inquired Charles.

"The estates were assigned to this treacherous knave, your Highness," said Sir Giles, pointing to Lanyere, "for a certain

consideration, which was never performed. But, while denying, as I do most energetically, that any underhand means whatever were used by us to obtain possession of those estates, and repeating my declaration that a most artful conspiracy has been formed against us, I assert, as will appear on investigation, that if I fail in sustaining my claim to the Mounchensey estates, they cannot go to Sir Jocelyn."

"Wherefore not?" inquired Charles.

"Because Sir Ferdinando left them to his brother Osmond. I have possession of his will."

"It may be a forgery," said Charles.

"Not so, your Highness," exclaimed Lupo Vulp. "This statement is correct."

"I have it with me now," cried Sir Giles, producing a document. "Will it please your Highness to look at it?" he added, handing it to the Prince. "You will see that the estates are wholly left to Osmond Mounchensey. If, therefore, your Highness should seek to deprive me of them, you must bestow them as they are herein bequeathed."

"Undoubtedly, if this instrument be valid," said Charles, looking at Lanyere.

"I do not dispute it, your Highness," said the promoter.

"But there is no proof that Osmond Mounchensey is living, your Highness," observed Lupo Vulp. "He has not been heard of for many years—not, indeed, since the time when his debts were paid by Sir Ferdinando. Though Sir Giles has used every exertion for the purpose, he has never been able to discover any traces of him—and it is reasonable, therefore, to suppose that he is no more."

"That is false," cried Sir Giles. "It is true I have long sought for him in vain—but within these few days I have obtained some tidings of him, which, if followed up, will assuredly lead to his detection. Nay, more, Lanyere himself must know that he is alive, since, from the intelligence I have received, he must have been recently in company with him."

"Is this assertion correct?" said Charles to the promoter.

"It is, your Highness," replied Lanyere; "but I had good reasons for concealing the circumstances."

"Undoubtedly," cried Sir Giles; "because you had ascertained from the traitor Lupo that this will existed, and feared a claim might be advanced to the estates—but they will never be yours, or Sir Jocelyn's. If not mine, they are Osmond Mounchensey's."

"He says right," remarked Charles.

"Then learn to your confusion, villain, that Osmond Mounchensey stands before you!" cried the promoter, addressing Sir Giles. "Behold him in me!"

"You Osmond Mounchensey!" exclaimed Sir Giles, eyeing

him with an astonishment which was shared by Sir Francis, and by the greater part of the spectators. To judge from their manner, however, Prince Charles, together with Buckingham and De Gondomar, did not seem unprepared for the announcement.

"Ay," rejoined Osmond to Sir Giles. "Look on me, if you can. Never should my name have been revealed to you, except at a moment when there should have been no chance of its repetition, on your part, but for my brother's will, of the existence of which I have only been lately aware, and which has obliged me to avow myself. But for this, I would have remained for ever in obscurity, and have perished as I have lived—the despised Clement Lanyere. The name of Mounchensey should not have been shamed in me. But if I am the reproach of that ancient and honourable house—untarnished by any other member of it—I am also its avenger, and will wipe out effectually the stains you have cast upon it. By your machinations, villain, was my brother destroyed—by your machinations has his son been imprisoned, and his life endangered—by your machinations I myself was censured by the terrible Star-Chamber, and its severest punishments inflicted upon me. You knew not whom you tortured; and had you been aware of my real name, even this wrong might not have contented you. But no matter. From the hour when the tormentor, by your order, did his work upon me, I devoted myself to vengeance—slow, sure vengeance. I resolved not to interfere with your career of villany till you were full-blown in crime; and though I have had some difficulty in holding back my hand, I have been patient. The hour at length has arrived, and I hold you firmly in my grasp. I have crushed in pieces the whole of the fabric you have been at such pains to rear. Your estates and all your possessions will be forfeited to the Crown; and, if you escape with life, you will bear the indelible marks of disgrace which you have inflicted upon me!"

Overpowered by what he heard, Sir Giles threw himself at the feet of Charles.

"Do not sue to me, sir," replied the Prince, regarding him with stern displeasure. "Enough for you to know that I have been in this much-injured gentleman's secret. Let your nephew now be introduced, sir," he added, to Osmond Mounchensey.

"His nephew!" muttered Sir Giles, as he arose. "Nay, then, all is indeed lost!"

"I have felt that for a long time," groaned Sir Francis.

CHAPTER LXI.

JUDGMENT.

On the intimation of the Prince's wishes, the tapestry was again raised to admit Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey, who, stepping forward, made a profound reverence to the Prince.

"I greet you well, Sir Jocelyn," said Charles, in the kindest and most gracious tone, as the young knight advanced towards him. "As your disgrace was public, so shall your restoration to the King's favour be likewise public. Your return to Court will be a satisfaction to his Majesty. Any imprudence of which you have been guilty will be entirely overlooked. All graver faults imputed to you have been explained, so that no unfavourable impressions against you remain upon my royal father's mind—or on mine. Let me assure you that you have now no more zealous friends than the Conde de Gondomar and the Marquis of Buckingham.

"For any wrong I may have done Sir Jocelyn I am heartily sorry," said Buckingham, frankly. "And he may rely on my present offer of friendship."

"And on mine, too," subjoined De Gondomar. "The services I have rendered him must be set against any mischief I have subsequently done."

"You make me more than amends," said Sir Jocelyn, bowing to them; "and I at once accept your proffered friendship."

"You are in the midst of friends and foes, Sir Jocelyn," said Prince Charles, "and have before you a new-found relative, and not far distant from you one who—unless I am greatly mistaken—has the strongest hold upon your affections; but before you turn to her, or to any one, listen to the sentence which in the King's name I shall pronounce upon those two offenders—a sentence which most assuredly will be ratified by his Majesty in person, and by the Lords of the Council of the Star-Chamber, before whom they will be brought. Hear me, then, ye wrong-doers. Ye shall be despoiled of your unjustly-acquired possessions, which will be escheated to the Crown. Where restitution is possible, it shall be made."

"Restitution by the Crown!—a likely thing!" muttered Sir Giles.

"Moreover, ye shall pay for your misdeeds in person," pursued Charles. "Degraded from the knighthood ye have dishonoured, and with all the ceremonies of debasement, when ye have become Giles Mompesson and Francis Mitchell, knaves, ye shall undergo precisely the same ignominious punishment, with all its dreadful details, which ye caused to be inflicted upon him you supposed

to be Clement Lanyere. This being done to you, and no part of the torture being on any plea omitted, ye shall be brought back to the Fleet Prison, and be there incarcerated for the residue of your lives."

Mompesson heard this sentence apparently unmoved, though his flashing eye betrayed, in some degree, his secret emotion. Not so his partner. Flinging himself on his knees before the Prince, he cried in piteous tones—"I confess my manifold offences, and own that my sentence is lenient in comparison with them. But I beseech your Highness to spare me the mutilation and branding. All else I will patiently endure."

"He merits no compassion," said Buckingham, "and yet I would intercede for him."

"And your intercession shall avail to the extent which he himself hath mentioned—but no further," rejoined Charles.

"I solicit nothing—and I confess nothing," said Mompesson, in a tone of defiance. "If I am ever brought to trial I shall know how to defend myself. But I well know that will never be. I can make such revelations concerning those in high places—ay, in the highest places," he added, with a vindictive look at Buckingham, "that they will not dare to molest me."

"The hound must be muzzled," said Buckingham, in a low tone, to the Prince.

"He must," replied Charles. "Let the prisoners be removed. They are committed to the Fleet Prison."

"Prisoners!" exclaimed Mompesson.

"Ay, prisoners," repeated Osmond Mounchensey; "*my* prisoners. I have a Star-Chamber warrant for your arrest. Behold it! Under this warrant his Highness has committed you, and you will be taken hence to the Fleet, where you, Giles Mompesson, shall occupy the cell you destined for my nephew! Now, your sword."

"Take it," rejoined Mompesson, plucking the rapier from its sheath, "take it in your heart. You, at least, shall not live to enjoy your triumph."

But Osmond was too quick for him, and seizing his arm, ere he could deal the meditated blow, with almost superhuman force he wrested the sword from him, and broke it beneath his feet.

At the same time, other personages appeared on the scene. These were the Serjeant-at-arms and a party of halberdiers. Advancing slowly towards the prisoners, the officer received the warrant from Osmond Mounchensey, while the halberdiers closed round the two extortioners.

"Before the prisoner, Mompesson, is removed," said Charles, "see that he delivers up to you his keys. Let an inventory be taken of all moneys within the house, and let the royal seal be placed upon all boxes and caskets. All deeds and other docu-

ments must be carefully preserved, to be examined hereafter. And let strict search be made—for I have heard there are many hidden depositories of treasure—especially within the prisoner's secret cabinet."

"Take heed that the strictest examination be made," subjoined Buckingham, "in accordance with his Highness's behests; for the knave smiles, as if he thought his precautions were so well taken that the searchers would be baffled."

"Fear nothing, my lord Marquis," replied the Serjeant-at-arms. "Now, prisoner," he added, to Mompesson, "your keys!"

While the officer was thus employed, Luke Hatton stepped forward.

"Those keys will be of little use," he said, to the Prince. "Others have been beforehand with your Highness."

"How, sir—what others?" demanded Charles, bending his brows.

"The extortioner's lawless band of attendants—generally known as his myrmidons, your Highness," replied Hatton. "Instinctively discerning, as it would seem, that all was over with their master, they had determined to quit his service, and without giving him any notice of their intention. Not content with deserting him in the hour of danger, they have robbed him as well—robbed him of the bulk of his treasure. They have broken into his secret cabinet, and stripped it of all its valuables that could be of use to them, and have not left one of his hidden hoards unvisited."

"Hell's curses upon them!" exclaimed Mompesson, with irrepressible rage. "May they all swing upon the gibbet!"

"The chief among them—a rascally Alsatian, known as Captain Bludder—has been captured," pursued Luke Hatton, "and a large sum, together with a rich casket of jewels, has been found upon him; and it is to be hoped that the officers will succeed in finding the others. "Will your Highness interrogate Bludder?"

"Not now," replied Charles. "Let him be taken to the Fleet. But there were other matters of more importance than the treasures—the deeds and legal instruments. These, as being useless to the robbers, were probably left untouched."

"They were so, your Highness," replied Luke Hatton.

"Would they had burned them!" ejaculated Mompesson. "Would all had been destroyed!"

And he gave utterance to such wild exclamations of rage, accompanied by such frenzied gestures, that the halberdier seized him, and dragged him out of the room. The old usurer was removed at the same time.

"And now," said Charles, rising from his chair, "one thing only remains to be done ere I depart, and it will be pleasanter

to me than aught that has preceded it. I must again address myself to you, Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey, ay, and to you also, fair Mistress Aveline. I pray you to come near me," he continued, with a gracious smile, to the damsel.

And, as she blushingly complied—for she half divined his purpose—he said, "As I have already told you, Sir Jocelyn, your restoration to the King's favour is complete, and your reappearance at Court would be a gratification to his Majesty; but, after the events which have occurred, a brief retirement will, I conceive, be most agreeable to you, and I would counsel a visit to the hall of your ancestors."

"Nothing could be more in accordance with my own wishes, most gracious Prince, if my newly-found relative will accept me as his guest."

"Not as his guest, my good nephew," said Osmond. "You are sole lord of Mounchensey. I have made over the mansion and all the estates to you. They are yours, as by right they should be."

Sir Jocelyn's emotion was too great to allow him to express his gratitude in words.

"A noble gift," exclaimed Charles. "But you must not go there alone, Sir Jocelyn. You must take a bride with you. This fair lady has well approved her love for you—as you have the depth of your devotion to her. Take her from my hands. Take her to your heart; and may years of fondest wedded happiness attend you both! When you reappear at Court, you will be all the more welcome if Lady Mounchensey be with you."

So saying, he placed Aveline's hand in that of her lover; and, with a look of ineffable delight, they knelt to express their gratitude.

The Prince and the courtly train passed out—and, lastly, Sir Jocelyn and the object of his affections. Vainly did he seek for his relative and benefactor. Osmond Mounchensey had disappeared. But, just as the young knight and his fair companion were quitting the house, Luke Hatton, followed by two porters, bearing a stout chest, approached them, and said—

"Sir Jocelyn, you have seen the last of your uncle. He has charged me to bid you an eternal adieu. You will never hear of him again, unless you hear of his death. May no thoughts of him mar your happiness—or that of her you love. This is what he bade me say to you. This chest contains the title-deeds of your estates—and amongst them is a deed of gift from him to you. They will be conveyed by these porters whithersoever you may direct them. And now, having discharged mine office, I must take my leave."

"Stay, sir," cried Sir Jocelyn; "I would fain send a message to my uncle."

"I cannot convey it," replied Luke Hatton. "You must rest content with what I have told you. To you, and to all others, Osmond Mounchensey is as the dead."

With this, he hastily retreated.

Three days after this, the loving pair were wedded; and the ceremony—which was performed with strict privacy, in accordance with the wishes of the bride—being concluded, they set out upon their journey into Norfolk. Sir Jocelyn had noticed among the spectators of the marriage rites, a tall personage, wrapped in a sable cloak, whom he suspected to be his uncle; but, as the individual was half hidden by a pillar of the ancient fabric, and as he lost sight of him before he could seek him out, he never could be quite sure of the fact.

Sir Jocelyn's arrival at the hall of his ancestors was the occasion of great rejoicings; and, in spite of the temptations held out to him, many years elapsed ere he and Lady Mounchensey revisited the scene of their troubles in London.

CONCLUDING CHAPTER.

RETRIBUTION.

As will have been foreseen, the judgment pronounced by Prince Charles upon Mompesson and his partner, was confirmed by the King and the Lords of the Council, when the two offenders were brought before them in the Star-Chamber. They were both degraded from the honour of knighthood; and Mitchell, besides being so heavily fined that all his ill-gotten wealth was wrested from him, had to endure the indignity of riding through the streets—in a posture the reverse of the ordinary mode of equitation—namely, with his face towards the horse's tail, two quart pots tied round his neck, to show that he was punished for his exactions upon ale-house keepers and hostel-keepers, and a placard upon his breast, detailing the nature of his offences. In this way—hooted and pelted by the rabble, who pursued him as he was led along, and who would have inflicted serious injuries upon him, and perhaps despatched him outright, had it not been for the escort by whom he was protected—he was taken in turn to all such taverns and houses of entertainment as had suffered most from his scandalous system of oppression.

In the course of his progress, he was brought to the Three Cranes in the Vintry, before which an immense concourse was assembled to witness the spectacle. Though the exhibition made by the culprit, seated as he was on a great ragged beast purposely selected for the occasion, was sufficiently ludicrous and grotesque to excite the merriment of most of the beholders,

who greeted his arrival with shouts of derisive laughter; still his wo-begone countenance and miserable plight—for he was covered with mud from head to foot—moved the compassion of the good-natured Madame Bonaventure, as she gazed at him from one of the upper windows of her hostel, and the feeling was increased as the wretched old man threw a beseeching glance at her. She could stand the sight no longer, and rushed from the window.

In the same room with her there were four persons who had been partaking of a plentiful repast, as was proved by the numerous dishes and flasks of wine garnishing the table at which they had been seated, and they, too, as well as the hostess, on hearing the noise outside the tavern, had rushed to the windows to see what could cause so much disturbance. As they were all well acquainted with the old usurer and his mal-practices, the spectacle had a special interest to them as well as to the hostess, and they were variously affected by it.

The party, we must state, consisted of Master Richard Taverner, as the quondam apprentice was now styled, and his pretty wife, Gillian, who now looked prettier than usual in her wedding attire,—for the ceremony uniting them in indissoluble bonds had only just been performed,—old Greenford, the grandsire of the bride; and Master John Wolfe, of the Bible and Crown in Paul's Churchyard, bookseller, erstwhile Dick's indulgent master, and now his partner; Master Taverner having very prudently invested the contents of the silver coffer in the purchase of a share in his employer's business, with the laudable determination of bestirring himself zealously in it ever after; and, as another opportunity may not occur for mentioning the circumstance, we will add that he kept to his resolution, and ultimately rose to high offices in the city. Dick's appearance had already considerably improved. His apparel was spruce and neat, but not showy, and well became him; while his deportment, even under the blissful circumstances in which he was placed, had a sobriety and decorum about it really surprising, and which argued well for his future good conduct. He began as he meant to go on; and it was plain that John Wolfe's advice had produced a salutary effect upon him. Old Greenford looked the picture of happiness.

With Master Richard's predilections for the Three Cranes we are well acquainted, and it will not, therefore, appear unnatural that he should choose this, his favourite tavern, for his wedding-dinner. Madame Bonaventure was delighted with the bride, and brought the blushes to her fair cheeks by the warmth of her praises of her beauty; while she could not sufficiently congratulate the bridegroom on his good luck in obtaining such a treasure. The best in the house was set before them—both viands and wine—and ample justice was done by all to the good cheer. Cyprien, as usual, brought in the dishes, and filled the

flagons with the rare Bordeaux he had been directed by his mistress to introduce; but Madame Bonaventure personally superintended the repast, carving the meats, selecting the most delicate bits for Gillian's especial consumption, and seasoning them yet more agreeably with her lively sallies.

The dinner had come to a close, and they were just drinking the health of the bonny and blushing bride, when the clamour on the quay proclaimed the old usurer's arrival. As he was the furthest person from her thoughts, and as she had not heard of the day appointed for his punishment, Madame Bonaventure was totally unprepared for the spectacle offered to her when she reached the window; and her retreat from it, as we have related, was almost immediate.

To his shame be it spoken, Master Richard Taverner was greatly entertained by the doleful appearance of his old enemy, and could not help exulting over his downfall and distress; but he was quickly checked by his bride, who shared in the hostess's gentler and more compassionate feelings. So much, indeed, was the gentle Gillian touched by the delinquent's supplicating looks, that she yielded to the impulse that prompted her to afford him some solace, and snatching up a flask of wine and a flagon from the table, she rushed out of the room, followed by her husband, who vainly endeavoured to stay her.

In a moment Gillian was out upon the quay; and the mounted guard stationed round the prisoner, divining her purpose, kindly drew aside to let her pass. Filling the goblet, she handed it to the old man, who eagerly drained it, and breathed a blessing on her as he returned it. Some of the bystanders said the blessing would turn to a curse—but it was not so: and so well pleased was Dick with what his good wife had done, that he clasped her to his heart before all the crowd.

This incident was so far of service to the prisoner, that it saved him from further indignity at the moment. The mob ceased to jeer him, or to hurl mud and missiles at him, and listened in silence to the public crier as he read aloud his sentence. This done, the poor wretch and his escort moved away to the Catherine Wheel, in the Steelyard, where a less kindly reception awaited him.

In taking leave, as we must now do, of Master Richard Taverner and his pretty wife, it gives us pleasure to say that they were as happy in their wedded state as loving couples necessarily must be. We may add that they lived long, and were blessed with numerous issue—so numerous indeed, that, as we have before intimated, Dick had to work hard all the rest of his days.

In bidding adieu, also, to Madame Bonaventure, which we do with regret, we have merely to state that she did not reign much longer over the destinies of the Three Cranes, but resigned in

favour of Cyprien, who, as Monsieur Latour, was long and favourably known as the jovial and liberal host of that renowned tavern. Various reasons were assigned for Madame Bonaventure's retirement; but the truth was, that, having made money enough, she began to find the banks of the Thames too damp and foggy for her, especially during the winter months; so the next time the skipper entered the river, having previously made her arrangements, she embarked on board his vessel, and returned to the sunny shores of the Garonne.

Mompesson's sentence, though far more severe and opprobrious than that of the elder extortioner, was thought too lenient, and most persons were of opinion that, considering the enormity of his offences, his life ought not to be spared. But they judged unadvisedly. Death by the axe, or even by the rope, would have been infinitely preferred by the criminal himself to the lingering agonies he was destined to endure. Moreover, there was retributive justice in the sentence that doomed him to undergo tortures similar to those he had so often inflicted on others.

The pillory was erected at Charing Cross. A numerous escort was required to protect him from the fury of the mob, who would otherwise have torn him in pieces; but, though shielded in some degree from their active vengeance, he could not shut his ears to their yells and execrations. Infuriated thousands were collected in the open space around the pillory, eager to glut their eyes upon the savage spectacle; and the shout they set up on his appearance was so terrific, that even the prisoner, undaunted as he had hitherto shown himself, was shaken by it, and lost his firmness, though he recovered it in some degree as he mounted the huge wooden machine, conspicuous at a distance above the heads of the raging multitude. On the boards on which he had to stand, there was another person besides the tormentor,—and the sight of him evidently occasioned the criminal great disquietude. This person was attired in black, with a broad-leaved hat pulled down over his brows.

"What does this fellow here?" demanded Mompesson. "You do not need an assistant."

"I know not that," replied the tormentor—a big, brawny fellow, habited in a leathern jerkin, with his arms bared to the shoulder—taking up his hammer and selecting a couple of sharp-pointed nails; "but in any case he has an order from the Council of the Star-Chamber to stand here. And now, prisoner," he continued, roughly and authoritatively, "place your head in this hole, and your hands here."

Since resistance would have been vain, Mompesson did as he was bidden. A heavy beam descended over his neck and wrists, and fastened him down immovably; while, amid the exulting shouts of the spectators, his ears were nailed to the wood. During one

entire hour the ponderous machine slowly revolved, so as to exhibit him to all the assemblage; and at the end of that time the yet more barbarous part of the sentence, for which the ferocious mob had been impatiently waiting, was carried out. The keen knife and the branding-iron were called into play, and in the bleeding and mutilated object before them, now stamped with indelible infamy, none could have recognised the once haughty and handsome Sir Giles Mompesson.

A third person, we have said, stood upon the pillory. He took no part in aiding the tormentor in his task; but he watched all that was done with atrocious satisfaction. Not a groan—not the quivering of a muscle escaped him. He felt the edge of the knife, to make sure it was sharp enough for the purpose, and saw that the iron was sufficiently heated to burn the characters of shame deeply in. When all was accomplished, he seized Mompesson's arm, and, in a voice that seemed scarcely human, cried,—"Now, I have paid thee back in part for the injuries thou hast done me. Thou wilt never mock me more!"

"In part!" groaned Mompesson. "Is not thy vengeance fully satiated? What more wouldst thou have?"

"What more?" echoed the other, with the laugh of a demon,—"for every day of anguish thou gavest my brother in his dungeon in the Fleet, I would have a month—a year. I would not have thee perish too soon, and therefore thou shalt be better cared for than he was. But thou shalt never escape—never! and at the last I will be by thy side."

It would almost seem as if that moment were come, for, as the words were uttered, Mompesson fainted from loss of blood and intensity of pain, and in this state he was placed upon a hurdle tied to a horse's heels, and conveyed back to the Fleet.

As threatened, he was doomed to long and solitary imprisonment; and the only person, beside the jailer, admitted to his cell, was his unrelenting foe. A steel mirror was hung up in his dungeon, so that he might see to what extent his features had been disfigured.

In this way three years rolled by—years of uninterrupted happiness to Sir Jocelyn and Lady Mounchensey, as well as to Master Richard Taverner and his dame; but of increasing gloom to the captive in his solitary cell in the Fleet. Of late, he had become so fierce and unmanageable that he had to be chained to the wall. He sprang at his jailer and tried to strangle him, and gnashed his teeth, and shook his fists in impotent rage at Osmond Mounchensey. But again his mood changed, and he would supplicate for mercy, crawling on the floor, and trying to kiss the feet of his enemy, who spurned him from him. Then he fell sick, and refused his food; and, as the sole means of preserving his life, he was removed to an airier chamber. But, as it speedily appeared, this was only a device to enable him to escape from

prison,—and it proved successful. He was thought to be so ill that the jailer, fancying him incapable of moving, became negligent, and when Osmond Mounchensey next appeared, the prisoner had flown. How he had effected his escape no one could at first explain; but it appeared, on inquiry, that he had been assisted by two of his old myrmidons, Captain Bludder and Staring Hugh, both of whom were prisoners at the time in the Fleet.

Osmond's rage knew no bounds. He vowed never to rest till he had traced out the fugitive, and brought him back.

But he experienced more difficulty in the quest than he anticipated. No one was better acquainted with the obscure quarters and hiding-places of London than he; but in none of these retreats could he discover the object of his search. The potentates of Whitefriars and the Mint would not have dared to harbour such an offender as Mompesson, and would have given him up at once if he had sought refuge in their territories. But Osmond satisfied himself, by a perquisition of every house in those sanctuaries, that he was not there. Nor had any one been seen like him. The asylum for "masterless men," near Smart's Quay, and all the other dens for thieves and criminals hiding from justice, in and about the metropolis, were searched, but with the like ill result. Hitherto, Mompesson had contrived entirely to baffle the vigilance of his foe.

At last, Osmond applied to Luke Hatton, thinking it possible his cunning might suggest some plan for the capture of the fugitive. After listening with the greatest attention to all related to him, the apothecary pondered for awhile, and then said—"It is plain he has trusted no one with his retreat, but I think I can find him. Come to me on the third night from this, and you shall hear further. Meantime, you need not relax your own search, though, if it be as I suspect, failure is sure to attend you."

Obliged to be satisfied with this promise, Osmond departed. On the third night, at a late hour, he returned. He did not, however, find Luke Hatton. The apothecary, it appeared, had been absent from home during the last three days, and the old woman who attended upon him was full of uneasiness on his account. Her master, she said, had left a letter on his table, and on investigation it proved to be for Osmond. In it the writer directed him, in the event of his non-return before the time appointed, to repair without delay, well armed, to the vaults beneath Mompesson's old habitation near the Fleet, and to make strict search for him throughout them. He also acquainted him with a secret entrance into the house, contrived in the walls beneath the lofty north-eastern turret. On reading this letter, Osmond at once understood his ally's plan, together with its danger, and felt that, as he had not returned, he had, in all pro-

bability, fallen a victim to his rashness. Telling the old woman whither he was going, and that inquiries might be made there for him on the morrow, if he did not re-appear with her master, he set out at once for the place indicated.

We shall, however, precede him.

Ever since Mompesson had been taken to the Fleet, his habitation had been deserted. The place was cursed. So much odium attached to it,—so many fearful tales were told of it,— that no one would dwell there. At the time of its owner's committal, it was stripped of all its contents, and nothing was left but bare walls and uncovered floors. Even these, from neglect and desertion, had become dilapidated, and a drearier and more desolate place could not be imagined. Strict search had been made by the officers of the Star-Chamber for concealed treasure; but little was found, the bulk having been carried off, as before related, by the myrmidons. Nevertheless, it was supposed there were other secret hoards, if a clue to them could only be found. Mompesson had been interrogated on the subject; but he only made answers calculated to excite the cupidity of his hearers without satisfying them, and they fancied he was deceiving them.

On the night in question, to all outward appearance, the house was sombre and deserted as usual, and the city watch who passed it at midnight, and paused before its rusty gates and its nailed-up door, fancied all was secure. The moon was at the full, shining brightly on the sombre stone walls of the mansion,—on its windows, and on the lofty corner turret, whence Mompesson used so often to reconnoitre the captives in the opposite prison; and, as certain of the guard looked up at the turret, they laughed at its present emptiness. Yet they little dreamed who was there at the time, regarding them from the narrow loop-hole. After the pause of a few minutes they moved on, and the gleam of their halberts was presently seen, as they crossed Fleet Bridge, and marched towards Ludgate.

About two hours afterwards the watch re-appeared, and, while again passing the house, the attention of their leader was attracted by an unusual appearance in the masonry near the north-east angle, above which the tall turret was situated. On closer examination, the irregularity in the walls was found to be produced by a small secret door, which was left partially open, as if it had been recently used. The suspicions of the party being aroused by this singular circumstance (none of them having been aware of the existence of such a door), they at once entered the house, resolved to make strict search throughout it. In the first instance, they scaled the turret, with which the secret outlet communicated by a narrow winding staircase; and then, proceeding to the interior of the habitation, pursued their investigations for some time without success. Indeed, they were just about to depart,

when a sound resembling a deep groan seemed to arise from the cellars, which they had not visited. Hearing this, they immediately rushed down, and made an extraordinary discovery.

To explain this, however, we must go back to the time when they first passed the house. We then mentioned that there was a person in the turret watching their movements. As they disappeared in the direction of Ludgate, this individual quitted his post of observation, and, descending the spiral staircase, threaded a long passage in the darkness, like one familiar with the place, until he arrived at a particular chamber, which he entered; and, without pausing, proceeded to a little cabinet beyond it. The moonlight streaming through a grated window, showed that this cabinet had been completely dismantled; stones had been removed from the walls; and several of the boards composing the floor had been torn up and never replaced. The intruder did not pass beyond the door, but, after gazing for a few minutes at the scene of ruin, uttered an ejaculation of rage, and retired.

His steps might have been next heard descending the great stone staircase. He paused not a moment within the entrance-hall, but made his way along a side passage on the left, and down another flight of steps, till he reached a subterranean chamber. Here all would have been profound obscurity, had it not been for a lamp set on the ground, which imperfectly illumined the place.

As the man took up the lamp and trimmed it, the light fell strongly upon his features, and revealed all their hideousness. No visage, except that of Osmond Mounchensey, could be more appalling than this person's, and the mutilation was in both cases the same. It is needless to say it was Mompesson. His habiliments were sordid; and his beard and hair, grizzled by suffering rather than age, were wild and disordered. But he was armed both with sword and dagger; and his limbs looked muscular and active as ever.

Casting a glance towards the entrance of the vault, as if to make quite sure he was not observed—though he entertained little anxiety on that score—Mompesson stepped towards a particular part of the wall, and touching a spring, a secret door (not to be detected within the masonry except on minute examination) flew open, and disclosed another and smaller vault.

Here, it was at once evident, was concealed the treasure that had escaped the clutches of the myrmidons and the officers of the Star-Chamber. There was a large open chest at the further end, full of corpulent money-bags, any one of which would have gladdened the heart of a miser. On this chest Mompesson's gaze was so greedily fixed that he did not notice the body of a man lying directly in his path, and well-nigh stumbled over it.

Uttering a bitter imprecation, he held down the lamp, and beheld the countenance of Luke Hatton, now rigid in death, but with the sardonic grin it had worn throughout life still impressed upon it. There was a deep gash in the breast of the dead man, and blood upon the floor.

"Accursed spy and traitor," cried Mompesson, as he took hold of the body by the heels and dragged it to one corner—"thou wilt never betray me more. What brought thee here I know not, unless it were to meet the death thou hast merited at my hands. Would a like chance might bring Osmond Mounchensey here—and alone—I would desire nothing more."

"Be thy wish gratified, then!" cried a voice which Mompesson could not mistake.

Looking up, he beheld his enemy.

In an instant his hand was upon his sword, and the blade gleamed in the lamp-light. Osmond had likewise plucked forth his rapier, and held a poniard in his left hand. For a few moments they gazed at each other with terrible looks, their breasts animated with an intensity of hatred which only mortal foes, met under such circumstances, can feel. So fiercely bloodthirsty were their looks that their disfigured features seemed to have lost all traces of humanity.

"Yield thee, murtherous villain!" cried Osmond, at length. "I will drag thee to the hangman."

"Call in thy fellows, and thou shalt see whether I will yield," rejoined Mompesson, with a laugh of defiance.

"I have none at my back," rejoined Osmond; "I will force thee to follow me alone!"

"Thou *art* alone then!" roared Mompesson; "that is all I desired."

And, without a word more, he commenced the attack. During the brief colloquy just detailed, he had noticed that his enemy was doubly armed, and before beginning the conflict he drew his own dagger, so that there was no greater advantage on one side than the other.

Both were admirable swordsmen, and in strength they were nearly matched; but the combat was conducted with a ferocity that almost set skill at defiance.

After the exchange of a few desperate passes they closed; and in the terrific struggle that ensued the lamp was extinguished.

The profound darkness prevented them from seeing the frightful wounds they inflicted on each other; but both knew they were severely hurt, though each hoped he was not so much injured as his adversary.

Exhausted at length by loss of blood, and ready to drop, they released each other by mutual consent; and, after making a few more feeble and ineffectual thrusts, leaned upon their swords for uspport.

"Wilt thou yield now, villain?" demanded Osmond, in a hoarse voice; "or must I finish thee outright?"

"Finish me!" echoed Mompesson, in tones equally hoarse. "Strike another blow against me if thou canst. But I well know thou art sped. When I have recovered breath, I will make short work with thee."

"About it quickly, then," rejoined Osmond; "I am ready for thee. But thy boast was idle. Thou art bleeding to death. Twice has my poniard pierced thy breast."

"Thou wilt never use thy poniard again, thy left arm is disabled," rejoined Mompesson; "besides, my sword passed through thee almost to the hilt."

"It glanced from my doublet: I scarcely felt the scratch."

"'Twas a scratch deep enough to let thy life-blood out. But since thou hast more to be spilt, have at thee again!"

"Where art thou?" cried Osmond, staggering towards him.

"Here!" rejoined Mompesson, avoiding the thrust made at him, and dealing one in return that stretched his adversary lifeless at his feet.

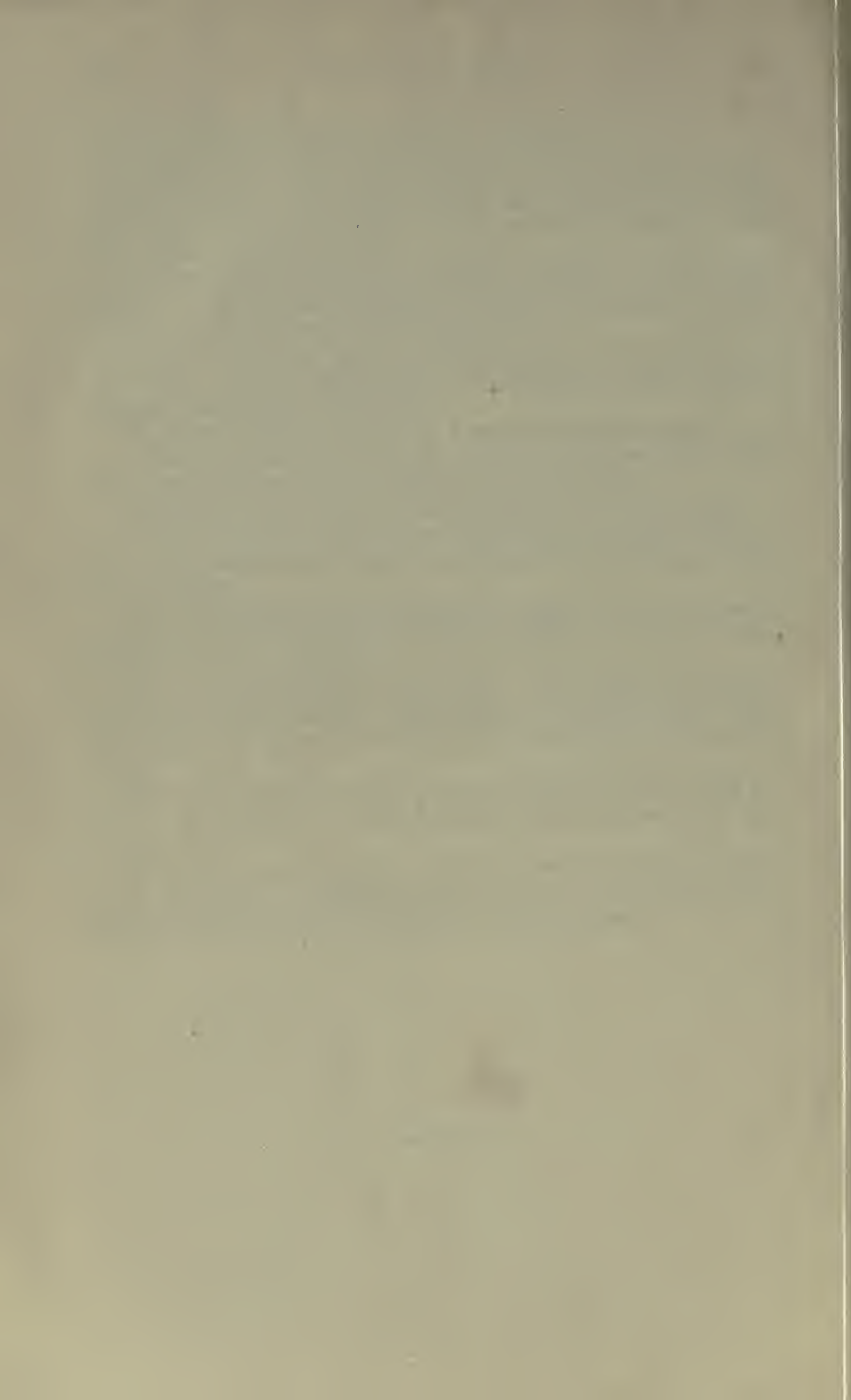
In the exultation of the moment, he forgot his own desperate condition, and, with a fierce, triumphant laugh, set his foot upon the body of his prostrate foe.

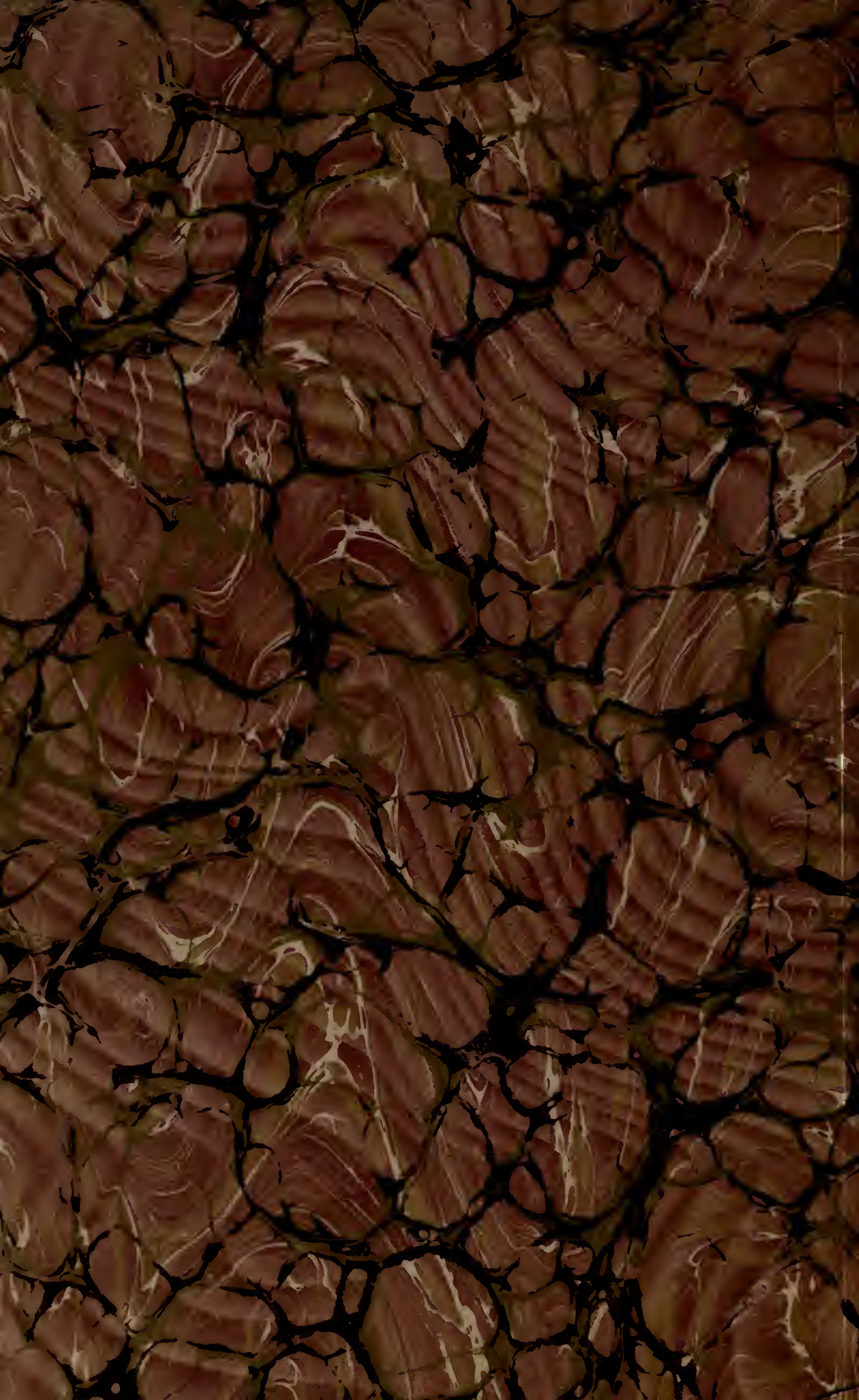
But a mortal faintness seized him. He essayed to quit the vault—but it was too late. His strength was utterly gone. With an irrepressible groan, he fell to the ground, close beside his enemy.

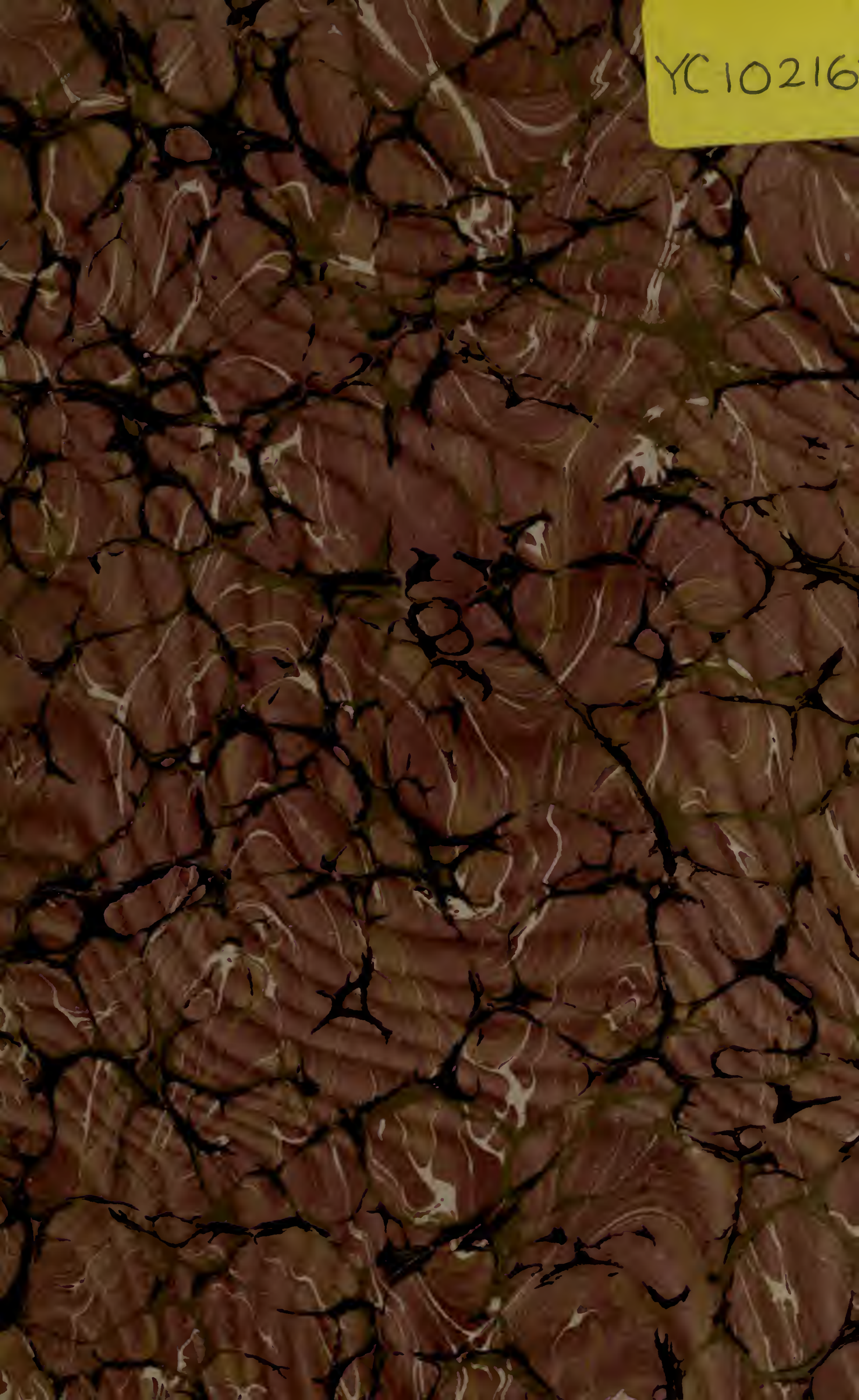
There they lay, the dying and the dead, for more than an hour. At the end of that time, they were discovered by the watch.

Mompesson yet breathed; and as the torch-light fell upon the scene of horror, he slightly raised his head, and pointing to his slaughtered adversary, with a ghastly smile, expired.

THE END.



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